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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE CREATIVE STRANGER'S JOURNEY.
TOWARDS A LIBERATING PEDAGOGY IN ART EDUCATION.

BY

CAMERON GRAHAM

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1988

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Date: April 19th 1988

Dedicated to my wife Poo Chee whose constant loving support was my source of inspiration and strength. And to my mother and father whose encouragement and love from afar has never diminished.

Abstract

This human science study focused initially on the problem of cultural preconceptions towards art, and their effect upon art education in our schools. A particular ethnocentric inertia was identified, which made a more multicultural, emancipating aesthetic and pedagogic view less attainable in art education.

In an attempt to discover an alternative creative and pedagogic view, three immigrant artists were contacted, all of whom had been in Canada for seven years or more, and were actively involved in different areas of the visual arts. Each took part in three conversations. Before the first conversation each person received a letter detailing the focus of research. In the conversations, experiences of leaving one's homeland were described by participants, as were experiences of settling into Canadian life. Creativity was an implicit part of all conversations. Its significance in the life world of the immigrant was closely examined. The cultural and historical archetype of the Stranger was used as a conceptual focus for both the conversations, and later interpretations. After each conversation, a letter reflecting on themes emergent from our previous conversation was sent to the participant, which acted as a starting point for the next conversation.

On completion of the three conversations, tapes of the talks were transcribed. Themes emerging from the conversations were identified. Five main themes were identified which characterized the participants' experiences as migrants, immigrants--and creative people. These themes together comprised a thematic composite in an

allegorical description of the unfolding experience of being a creative Stranger in Canada. The Stranger archetype was used as a composite character in these descriptions of the "life journey" of the immigrant.

These descriptions suggested that using art as a form of biographical expression was a means for the individual to understand, more consciously critical and meaningfully empowered, his/her life world. The thematic model that emerged from the interpretations was used to generate an initiative for art education which provided an alternative approach for the teaching of art in our schools. This initiative consisted of using a biographical, process approach to art pedagogy. An integral notion within this process was that of a biographical art as an experiential journey.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Jan Jagodzinski, my supervisor, provided direction and constructive criticism. Through his constant encouragement and assistance my study gained shape. His tireless commitment to this study is deeply appreciated.

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To Poo Chee, whose ideas, insights and perceptiveness never cease to amaze me.

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CHAPTER ONE

Docile Bodies?

Introduction

The status of art in our schools has long been unsure. Commonly, it is seen as a peripheral, recreational activity. In this era of the "return to basics" movement, art is seen as merely therapeutic or as an activity rigorously pursued by only a talented few. For most students and parents, art's intrinsic value as part of the curriculum is to say the least, debatable. Why does art occupy such a token position in the school curriculum? Why indeed, is its very relevance to the student's culture-as-lived questionable?

In her book Instant Art, Instant Culture[1] (1982), Laura Chapman through her researches has concluded that the "cultural elite", whose influence and patronage underscores arts/educational practice, see art education as being of negligible value. Overwhelmingly, their own art education has been based on a thorough formal grounding in an appreciation of the "fine arts" in the European tradition. Chapman defines the cultural elite as the top ten percent of the population, who are by far the largest patrons of the arts, either financially or through their regular attendance at the venues of arts events.

Within this cultural perspective, creativity in the patron's consciousness is the preserve of the talented few. The artist is

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[1] Chapman, Laura. Instant Art, instant Culture. The unspoken policy for American schools. Teachers College. Columbia University, NY and London, 1982.

allotted a particular role in society by this placement, a role which in its exclusivity banishes more people than it admits. Among those exiles are the majority of our children and adults. Art is overwhelmingly seen by most members of society as an activity of the privileged, deemed to have little relevance to their daily lives. The question that is frequently asked in the discussion of the pro's and cons of art education is: " What use is art anyway?" How can art become of more use to us all as feeling, expressive human beings?

Art and art education are both hamstrung by a whole gamut of popular misconceptions which tend to minimize their ability to affect, or communicate with most people. These popular "sayings"[2] about art bear a remarkable similarity to many of the patron-elite's[3] viewpoints on art, the artist and society. As Chapman observes:

> Within this group of persons who are highly involved in the arts, eighty five percent do not agree that you have to study or learn about such things as art before you can understand or enjoy them. This same opinion, which implies that education is not really essential in the arts, was held by seventy eight percent of the general public.[4]

The way that such views function though, vary dramatically between "the patron" and "John Doe". The patron is within the charmed circle, a connoisseur of the "Fine Arts". His/her perspective maintains the mythic-magical integrity of the circle:

> The sympathies of the New Arts Establishment and its advocates are not directed toward school programs that reach all children and provide for continuous study of the arts.

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[2] Ibid. p.5 & 29.
[3] Ibid. p.9.
[4] Ibid. p.7.

> Rather, arts advocates are urging parents, educators and citizens to endorse ideas that would, if acted upon, increase the distance between the elite and the public.[5]

For John Doe the exotic mystique surrounding art and the artist seems to exclude him/her even more firmly from creative participation. How then can we, 1: Endeavor to create an artistic consciousness that is more inclusive? And 2: What are the benefits to the student and the child of that inclusion?

Art as we have already seen, is perceived as irrelevant to the needs of the students, and by implication, to their lives as future adults: "Few children (or adults) really understand how their attitudes and their conduct can be affected by the visual forms they encounter every day."[6] Chapman outlines a useful curriculum framework for art education[7] which attempts to re-orient art education toward a more socially meaningful and egalitarian position for the student.

We live in a culture where much of our understanding of the world is built from what we see:[8]

> Encounters with advertising, television, products, and buildings are powerful and unavoidable ingredients of our lives. The

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[5] Chapman, Laura. Instant Art, instant Culture. The unspoken policy for American schools. Teachers College. Columbia University, NY and London, 1982. p.9.

[6] Ibid. p.29.

[7] Ibid. p.33.

[8] Lowe, D. History of bourgeois perception. University of Chicago press, 1982. "Seeing. . . is preeminently a distancing, judgemental act. The data of the other four senses come to us, so that perceptually we connect ourselves to what is proximate. But sight is extension in space, presupposing a distance." p.6. "The field of perception determines the content of the knowledge; but that field is itself determined by society as totality. For knowledge within totality is much more than simply ideology or superstructure. It is the intentional consciousness within a perceptual field." p.14.

> characteristics of such forms--their design, style, material, form, symbolism, all influence how we respond to them--shaping in subtle and obvious ways our habits of thought and conduct, our sense of time and place, and our personal identities--the visual, spatial and material world we live in is not simply a given, but a large scale expression of our individual and collective values. In the absence of well-developed skills in perceiving visual forms and understanding how visual forms can convey meaning, we are prone to treat many of the things we see without sensitivity, grace, or regard for the human effort behind their creation.[9]

In short our total environment, and its interplay with all the senses provides us all with an implicit and explicit aesthetic enculturation and education. We are steeped in the flavor of the lifeworld. However, much of this schooling in a culture's tastes remains at the taken-for-granted level. If art is to assume a more central and relevant role, a critical understanding at a conscious level of the aesthetic environment must be a goal of art education. A bringing to consciousness of the forces and interests that forge this aesthetic environment would help inculcate an appreciation of the social relevance of art, and the germs of a student's social critique, with art as an important agent. As art educators, our first encounter with our students is within the physical confines of the school. The configuration of the school's attitudinal and physical parameters has a history which shapes the contemporary aesthetics of its environment, which I shall discuss later.

The aesthetic environment of the school is where our first creative interactions with students take place. This demands that

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9 Chapman, Laura. Instant Art, instant Culture. The unspoken policy for American schools. Teachers College Columbia University, NY and London, 1982. p.30.

both art educator and students alike enter into a critical, creative research of this locale in order that they collectively come to understand where they are "located" in this environment, physically and attitudinally. As art educators we must first discover what children learn informally in their interactions with the physical environment of the school. Such a review would examine the aesthetic characteristics of the school, looking at the images children see and the values that the school communicates to them about art, directly and implicitly. Children learn about art through the very design of classrooms and through the sensory and behavioral impact of graphic materials and displays. The choreography of movement in and through the school is part of their aesthetic education. Chapman proposes a spatial and cognitive "choreography" of an aesthetic awareness, as it moves among the disciplines, and through the school environment. This pedagogic locus is a created environment, and as such is a physical and cognitive culmination of historical ideas of what a school should be. What are these historical ideas, and are they destructive or creative of a students artistic consciousness? Michel Foucault (1984), in his historical analysis of the Institution, suggests that the school has traditionally, in its desire to achieve standardized, predictable behavior in its students, tended to encourage a certain passivity, rather than encouraging criticism and free expression. Indeed, the choreography of school and student may signify a traditional relationship of domination.

In Docile Bodies[10] Foucault observes that: "The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power [a] body that is manipulated, shaped, trained; which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces." A body is docile that may be: "subjected, used, transformed and improved."[11] The body becomes a regulated, predictable "aptitude". This transformation of the body into a "political anatomy" was adopted in secondary education at a very early date, a little later in primary schools, usually as a response to societal needs; perhaps an industrial innovation, or the outbreak of hostilities or epidemics.

The Enlightenment has brought to us the tradition of a technique of rigorous observation, suffused with a political awareness of its significance. It is a means to control and use men. It is comprised of: "A whole set of techniques, a whole corpus of methods and knowledge, descriptions, plans and data",[12] many of which are so embedded in the contemporary psyche that they are regarded as "given's" of our lifeworld. It is ironic indeed that our contemporary notion of the "man of modern humanism"[13] was born from this tradition of control. Our culture's conception of the free individual may owe much to a historical captivation and domestication. Foucault states in "The means of correct training"[14] that: "The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an ideological

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10 Rabinow, P. The Foucault Reader. Pantheon NY, 1984. p.181.
11 Ibid. p.180.
12 Ibid. p.185.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid. p.188.

representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power."

As art educators, we must appreciate that our very understanding of individuality is culture bound, the current manifestation of a specific tradition. This strongly colors our notion of the artist-as-individual, and can produce a singular aesthetic ethnocentrism. Other cultural traditions than that of the west European, North American heritage have a markedly different conception of both art and the self. As artists and pedagogues in a multi-cultural country, we must constantly remind both ourselves and our students of this phenomenon lest art education present solely the paradigmatic worldview of a dominant culture. I shall return to the notion of a cross-cultural idea of what it means to do art later.

Let us return now to Foucault's notion of the student-body as both subject and object of observation and control in the school environment. The transformation of the individual/body into a body-politic was greatly enhanced in the eighteenth century by an unprecedented growth in Europe of the public institutions; hospitals, mental institutions, schools. Schools were designed and built with a central priority in mind; to observe and control. In order that observation be accomplished with optimum efficiency, an appropriate technology was devised: "An architecture [was] no longer built simply to be seen, but [also] to permit an internal, articulated, and detailed control--to render visible those who are inside it. [It was] an architecture that would operate to transform

individuals; to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to know them, to alter them."[15]

This burgeoning technology was developed with the precision and eye for detail characteristic of the Enlightenment mind. The design of buildings would faithfully honor the principles of observation and control in its: "calculation of openings, of filled and empty spaces, passages and transparencies."[16] The school building was shaped to be a: "Mechanism for training, a pedagogical machine."[17] Such "educational" institutions: "secreted a machinery of control that functioned like a microscope of conduct. The fine, analytical divisions that they created formed around men, an apparatus of observation, recording and training."[18]

This regime of precise observation brought into the school far reaching mechanisms of power. This disciplinary power became an integrated system, inextricably linked to wider social and economic interests. Under the auspices of this system students were subjected to a simultaneously extensive and intensive, spatial and temporal control. Any infringements were penalized: "The school [was] subject to a whole micropenalty of time, (latenesses, absences, interruptions of tasks)."[19]

The standardized duration of tasks helped establish the notions of program, and regulation: "The time taken to perform an exercise, the level of aptitude refer to a regularity that is also a rule, the

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15 Ibid. p.190.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid. p.191.
19 Ibid. p.194.

duration of each stage is fixed by regulation."[20] This school-as-machine: "Compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it Normalizes. The Normal is established as a principal of coercion in teaching with the introduction of a standardized Education."[21]

The imposition of the norm has not de-individualized the student. Rather, his/her self has become an object of analysis in order that their behavior and aptitudes could be correctly regulated, thus guaranteeing proper orientation to their slot in society: "It was the problem of the teaching establishments to define the aptitude of each individual, situate his levels and his abilities, [and] indicate the possible use that might be made of them."[22]

The vast majority of our educational institutions still wrestle with this same problematic in the treatment of their students. Observation in such schools describes individuality and categorizes it, making of it a means of control and a method of domination. Such control ensures that the student becomes a commodity for consumption for him/herself, having acquiesced to the process of observation, regulation and examination.

The school environment and its regulatory practices could, arguably be said to be still transmitting (albeit in a modified form) the same field of power, through observation and manipulation. Inevitably art education is enmeshed in these lines of force. How then, can it avoid these regulations? A powerful case could be

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20 Ibid. p.195.
21 Ibid. p.195.
22 Ibid. p.201.

argued indeed, that historically and contemporaneously, art and art education has been co-opted by these same powers.

Advancing the Question.

As inheritors of a particular western tradition, we are suffused with the interplays of power that give shape to the world-as-lived. In order to help us bring to a critical consciousness such interplays, a distanced perspective not wholly immersed in the habituality of our society, would bring to the surface that which would otherwise be hidden. Can a Stranger to our culture, a newcomer, an immigrant, help us understand and liberate ourselves from some of our traditional bondings through the critique of our culture that his/her art provides? Can the Stranger help us reach toward an emancipating art that includes students, teachers and the "ordinary" person?

The practice and appreciation of an inclusive, emancipatory art would make an aesthetized, sensual understanding of our world far more attainable for ourselves, and our children. Such an awareness would add an artistic presence to an enlightened critique of our culture which is inherently liberating. Living in a multicultural country like Canada which supposedly espouses the ideal of the cultural "mosaic", our experiences of creativity vary enormously according to our personal cultural histories. This creative wealth offers the potential for enrichment, not only in the lives of students, but also in all our living and working environments. In recent years much progress has been made with this in mind. Nevertheless, as

Aoki et al (1977) observe in Whose Culture, whose heritage,[23] there is much left to be done, and little room for complacency. In their research, they found that predominantly, greater emphasis was placed upon European cultural content in the curriculum, to the exclusion of ideas and creativity from other parts of the globe. They discovered:

> An overwhelming monocultural orientation, that of the dominant British-French group. Emphasis upon European cultural content to the exclusion of nearly all non-European influence in Canada is evident. Our society is shown to be derived from European traditions, art, literature, music and personalities. Classical antiquity becomes exclusively that of the Greeks and Romans, rather than that of the Chinese and the West Coast Indians.[24]

Students are provided with the same cultural tradition and values in their enculturation, regardless of their own ethnic origins. This notion of western Europe as the birthplace of "high culture" is pervasive, and our attitudes towards the creative endeavors of other cultures and its representatives is colored by this aspect of our ethnocentrism. This tendency shows relatively few indications of changing: "Although we laugh at ourselves for doing so and perhaps have convinced each other that today things are different we are continuing to teach a white, anglo-saxon, protestant, political and constitutional history of Canada."[25] This Anglo-French, European hegemony still reigns in many of our popular conceptions of the role

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23 Aoki, Connors, Dahlie & Werner. Whose culture, whose heritage: Ethnicity within Canadian social studies curricula. Centre for the study of curriculum and instruction, Faculty of Ed., UBC, 1977.

24 Ibid.

25 Hodgetts, A.B. What culture? What heritage? A Study of civic education in Canada. Ontario institute for studies in education; Toronto. 1970. p.7.

of art. In The experience of Art: Some problems and possibilities of Hermeneutical analysis,[26] Paul Crowther describes the common conception thus: "It holds characteristically that aesthetic experience arises when say, we perceive a painting in relation to its qualities of line and color and their interrelations, rather than in relation to the content which these lines and colors represent." Chapman (1982) attests to this also, observing that the European formalist aesthetic is still the preferred pedagogic content of much of our art education: "The typical dry comparisons among the arts based on formalist principles . . . line, shape, movement, rhythm and so forth."[27]

She goes on to suggest a more wholistic, cross-cultural treatment of what it means to create:

> A course might be designed around the idea of 'rites of passage'. Students would learn that in almost every generation and culture the arts serve as a means to express important life events. What artforms are associated with birth, with childhood, adolescence? How might the arts enter our lives later--at work, while raising a family, during retirement, even at our death? In such a course, the fine, popular and applied arts could be treated; cross-generational and cross-cultural comparisons could be made."[28]

Such curricular initiatives would greatly increase the student's awareness of the applicability of the creative arts to their own lives.

Such an admirable pedagogic course of action however, is not without risks. The treatment of creativity cross-culturally should be

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26 Crowther, Paul. The experience of Art: Some problems and possibilities of Hermeneutical analysis. Philosophy and phenomenological research. Vol.43. 1982-3. p.21.

27 Gablik, S. Has modernism failed? Thames & Hudson, 1984. p.21.

28 Ibid.

based on a mutual sharing, not merely one culture's patronizing perusal of the creative artifacts of another. The risk is that old restrictive practices be reified in the education of the young. In its relationship with other cultures at least until recently, western society's ethnocentrism has taken a patronizing, paternalist form. As an expansionist culture, Europeans viewed the culture of subject peoples as there to be exploited like any other commodity. "Exotic" artifacts flooded into European collections, private and public. Chinese vases, screens and silk for example, became much-prized in Paris and London in the eighteenth century. One hundred and fifty years later, Picasso was collecting West African carvings, using their vigorous imagery in "Desmoiselles D'Avignon". The west's relationship with non-occidental creativity has for the most part been an exploitative one. This particular perspective, born of an ethos that strives to control, manipulate, and exploit, continues unabated. In a sense this particular western ethnocentric tendency, to impose western aesthetic sensibilities on non-western artifacts, is exemplified in the "rubber data" phenomenon described by Frielich[29](1970), where the work of nineteenth century anthropologists Bastian and MacLennan is deemed to illustrate: "The rubber data stage of anthropology, when the information available was both stretchable and stretched", in order that it fit their own particular preconceptions and theories.

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29 Frielich, Morris. Fieldwork; An Introduction. Marginal Natives, Anthropologists at work. New York, Harper and Row, 1970. p.7.

The artistic View.

Students, lest they perpetuate the coercions of an aesthetic ethnocentrism, need to understand through the cultivation of their aesthetic sensibilities how we individually and as a culture, view art. An understanding that our tastes are uniquely our own, and an appreciation that other peoples contextualize and create art differently, should be fostered in our art education. A "case study" approach is one possible means of developing a multi-faceted, "polyocular"[30] aesthetic, synthesizing the aesthetic and anthropological viewpoints. The formalist ethic in western art education tends to treat the western notion of taste as universal. Art is perceived as a unique statement of an individual about the world s/he lives in. A painting, a novel, a sculpture is considered valuable (both materially and aesthetically) due to its uniqueness. If for example Balinese art, its motivations and expressions, were dealt with, students would be provided with a new insight on what it means to create:

> There is in Bali a persistant and systematic attempt to stylize all aspects of personal expression, where anything

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30 Maruyama, M. Endogenous Research and polyocular Anthropology. Perspectives on Ethnicity. World Anthropology. Edited by Regina E. Holloman and Serghei Arutinov. The Hague, Mouton, 1978. p. 82.

Endogenous research & Binocular vision.

Endogenous research:

> Each culture is studied by its insiders using endogenous epistemology, methodology, research design, and with endogenously relevant focus.

Binocular vision:

> Research by insiders and by outsiders can be juxtaposed to produce binocular vision, just as left and right eye vision combined produce three dimensional perception not because the two eyes see different sides, but because the differences between the two images enable the brain to compute the invisible dimension.

> idiosyncratic, anything characteristic of the individual merely because he is who he is psychologically or biographically, is muted in favour of his assigned place in the never changing pageant that is Balinese life. Physically men come and go, of no genuine importance even to themselves. But the masks they wear, the Stage they play, the spectacle they mount remain, and comprise not the facade but the substance of things, not least the self . . . the performed rather than the performer really matters.[31]

In a cross-cultural comparison of the artforms of Bali and North America, students could examine the functioning of art in two very different cultural environments. Here, art education becomes the cutting edge of a radical inquiry. A social-aesthetic critique of the student's own lifeworld would be facilitated. Is such a rigorous cultural and aesthetic critique occurring in our schools? If we are to believe the testimony of Aoki, Chapman, Foucault et al the reply is resoundingly negative.

Toward new vistas.

Inexorably, we are led to some important questions alluded to implicitly in the text of both Aoki's and Chapman's research:

1. To what extent does an aesthetic hegemony at work in our culture exercise an ethnocentric tyranny of taste?
2. Does this stifle the free expression of the newcomer, the immigrant, precluding a just representation of his/her native creativity in the schools, and media?
3. How, as the subjects of its analysis, can we evade the aesthetic tunnel vision of our culture's proclivity for control and manipulation?

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31 Geertz, C. From the native's point of view. On the nature of anthropological understanding. Bulletin of the American Academy of arts and sciences. Vol.28.1, 1974. p. 228

4. Is there a special perspective which can enable us to effect a creative escape? Who possesses this privileged view?

In his book, The Turning Point,[32] Fritjof Capra develops the idea that todays world is imprisoned within a perceptual "wall" that has its origins in a Newtonian-Cartesian model of an "objective" reality. Newtonian mechanics imposes a machine metaphor on the "workings" of the universe. As an "efficient tool" of nineteenth century industrial engineering, its hold on Victorian perceptions of the world was unbreakable. Such a world-view has had profound implications for our attitude toward cultures who do not share our particular orientation. The Newtonian-Cartesian world is essentially a homogeneous one. There is little room for other ways of viewing reality. This reality accepts only that which is perceived through the senses, or through those artificial sensors of "reality", machines. The intangible worlds of the inner self or spirituality have, since the inception of this particular world-view been increasingly ignored or ridiculed, as being unworthy of rational[33] analysis. As a participant in this reality, creative people have had no choice but to respond, by means of their creative opposition or support. Overwhelmingly most western artists have in the last two hundred years,[34] been co-opted into a secular capitalist "way of seeing".[35]

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32 Capra, F. The Turning point. Bantam new age books,1982. "What we are concerned with is..the application of the mechanistic world-view on which Newtonian physics is is based." p.102.

33 Harris, Marvin. The rise of anthropological Theory. Crowell. NY. p.492.

34 Jagodzinski, J. Aesthetic consciousness and criticism. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Department of Secondary Education, Faculty of Education. University of Alberta, 1980.

35 See Berger, John. Ways of Seeing. Penguin, London,1972.

Nevertheless, the creativity of some artists have shown a resistance to the prevailing form. Gauguin, in his self-imposed isolation in Tahiti, exemplified the artist who seeks "the (wo)man within",[36] by achieving a creative sensitization through a voluntary alienation from his own culture. What though are the consequences for an appreciation of the art of those *within* our society who do not share the same conception of what form and content should embody? This repressed human potential is exemplified by the plight of the "voiceless strangers" of our society, creatively oppressed by their inability to give expression to their lifeworld. Could such people find voice and a reclamation of self through the execution and appreciation of a liberating art? How can this "creative Stranger" make more meaningful the lived-world of those who are *members* of a society?

In order to grapple more effectively with these questions, I shall in chapter three describe more fully this figure of the Stranger. It offers in its implications I believe, a dialectical opposition to the dominant aesthetic, and a chance of an art that liberates. Its potential as a fruitful area for conversational research will be dealt with next, in chapter two.

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36 This ancient notion of a search for a "true", "essential" self, the "Homunculus", is described by Maurice Merleau Ponty, in: Man and Adversity. Signs. MacCleary tr., Evanston_Ill. Northwestern University press, 1965. He sees it as an errant notion, representative of our culture's historic Cartesian mind-body schism:

> The 'little man within man' is only the phantom of our successful expressive operations; and the admirable man is not this phantom but the man who--installed in his fragile body, in a language which has already done so much speaking, and in a reeling history--gathers himself together and begins to see, to understand, and to signify. p.242.

CHAPTER TWO

Towards the Question

Introduction.

In this Chapter I shall describe the nature of my research question. The following topics will be described and examined:

1. The intent of my Study.
2. My methodology.
3. The rationale for my choice of method.
4. Notes on typography and grammar.
5. Significance of Study.
6. Ethical considerations.

Unearthing forgotten treasures

The intent of my study is to understand more deeply the enculturation of the migrant in Canada, and particularly the enculturation of the "artistic" migrant, through his/her own eyes, so that I might apply my understandings to art education in this multicultural society. I want to "unearth" what this particular kind of immigrant has to say to all of us about the experience of leaving ones native soil, and settling down in a new country.

I will be conversing with people who were creatively active in the visual arts in their country of origin, and have continued to be so involved here. Through my communication with them, I will endeavor to understand more deeply how creativity draws from the mother culture, and how a "mutation" of that creativity takes place in the new homeland. The process of rending that the individual

experiences from the corpus of the mother culture, the sense of loss of self-identity, the potential escapes from "strangeness" that can occur when the newcomer adjusts to the new culture, will be examined. These biographic reflections, as described and interpreted by me, will constitute the study.

The following questions will inform my intent:

a) What kind of new creative perspective has developed for them through their experiences of alienation and adjustment?

b) How does this process speak to the lived-world of the Immigrant?

c) What lessons has this experience for us in the art education sphere?

Method

To understand the creative/created world of this "Stranger", it is necessary to combine the empathetic "artistic" approach with the sensitive level-headedness necessary in ethnographic or anthropological studies. With this in mind, I intend to meet and converse[1] with three creatively involved people whom I shall contact through the Edmonton Learner Center and Alberta Culture.

These people will have been in Canada for more than five years. My partners in conversation need to have been in Canada for more than five years in order to have had sufficient time to reflect upon their changing experience, and to have come to their own particular understandings of living in a new land. I have chosen to

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1 Gadamer,H. Truth and Method. Crossroad, NY, 1986. p.330.

speak to three people as I see this as the optimum number of people with whom I can meaningfully and feelingly converse, given the many restrictions on my own and their time. Also, I feel that additional participants would result in the growth of the research to unwieldy and ultimately depersonalized, proportions.

Prior to our first conversation, I shall write to and informally meet with each person, in order that we can gauge each other's expectations of the work. Each conversation will be of approximately ninety minutes duration. I plan to have three such conversations with each person. I chose this time span for three reasons:

1. So that the arranging of dates and times would not be too difficult.
2. In order that the conversations would not last too long, and "go stale".
3. To enable us to lengthen or shorten the conversation time, according to how we "felt it was going".
4. Having spoken informally with other people who had undertaken similar kinds of research, I believed that this time-structuring would probably provide the optimum conditions for the creation of new shared understandings and meanings.

Conversations with those involved will be recorded in a relaxed unobtrusive atmosphere. Through my ongoing discourses with them over a period of twelve weeks,[2] I hope to engender an atmosphere where progressively more insightful disclosures of experiences, events and concepts, can be recorded.

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2 See Appendix B.

After each conversation, I shall write my own reflections[3] on the discourse, describing the meaning that I feel may have emerged from it. I shall send these reflections to my partner-in-discourse before our next meeting. In the subsequent conversation, s/he will consequently have an opportunity to respond to my own interpretations of our previous talk. S/he can then join with me in reworking my interpretations in the creativity of fresh discourse, in an ongoing creation of shared meaning. If s/he wishes, I shall welcome his/her own written reflections[4] on our conversations, as a further enrichment of meaning in our dialogue. In this exchange of reflections written and verbal, at all stages of our discourse, I can thus ensure that any misconstrued interpretations of mine in our talk are kept to a minimum. Consequently, in this openness of communication, as much of the original meaning of our discourse can emerge as is possible under the circumstances. My partners-in-conversation thus become involved as co-authors of the text of not only our conversations, but also subsequent reflections and interpretations.

A Hermeneutic Task?

The people with whom I will converse all possess a unique biography, their description of which will embark us upon the hermeneutic task of: "reconstruction and integration."[5] Essential to this task is the goal of: "Understanding, [which] must be conceived as

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3 See Appendix G.
4 Ibid.
5 Gadamer, H. Truth and Method. Crossroad, NY, 1986. p.147.

a part of the process of the coming into being of meaning."[6] The reconstructive facet to this task will enable us to understand together, the journey from membership of a culture to an initial sense of estrangement in another. This sense of estrangement emanates from a dismemberment from the cultural body of meaning. This corpus is the person's meaning-structure, which:

> No longer expresses itself and through its own world; that is, everything that is handed down, whether Art or the other spiritual creations of the past, Law, Religion, Philosophy and so forth, is estranged from its original meaning and depends, for its unlocking and communicating, on that spirit that we, like the Greeks, call Hermes.[7]

That is to say, hermeneutics.

Those with whom I enter into conversation were "of the soil" of another land. Hence, their artistic raison d'etre emerging as it does from their consciousness is in a sense, born of that same soil. Consequently, it is argued that: "The work of Art loses something of its significance if it is torn from its original context; a work of Art too, is rooted in its own soil."[8]

My hope, embarking on a hermeneutic "voyage" to a deeper understanding, is that I can unveil for the Stranger in all of us, a new synthesis of meaning that approaches an understanding of creativity in a wider cultural milieu. This would be emergent from the hermeneutic: "Historic spirit [which] does not consist in the restoration of the past, but in thoughtful mediation with contemporary life."[9] A rooting in new soil.

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6 Ibid. p.146.
7 Ibid. p.147.
8 Ibid. p.148.
9 Ibid. p.150

Creativity and the Hermeneutic conversation.

True to Gadamer's (1975) notion of coming to the question, my research "question" and its "method" formed thanks to my own biographical history.[10] Born of this life-tale is a commitment to the egalitarian notion of liberation, which is of itself a moral commitment to reflection and action. As an artist, this moral commitment is wedded to my striving for an emancipating, responsible[11] art, that expressively addresses the call for freedom and an end to a culturally bound oppression of taste. I shall trace the conversational journey which my co-conversants and I undertook, addressing the new insights which emerged during this journey as they arise in the text, and also in the subsequent reflections.

To embark upon a conversation in its hermeneutic sense, is to enter into a journey with a moral commitment which is a call to reflection and action.[12] In the context of my research, that call to action is informed by my conversations with three creative strangers. The notion of praxis[13] implicitly "colors" our

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10 See Appendix A.

11 I use Popper's definition of an artist's responsibility here: Popper,F. Art, Action and Participation. Cassell & Collier MacMillan pubs. London,1975. "The only way to come to terms with the new role of the artist, as he is placed among the novel relationships in the aesthetic schema of today, is by underlining his social responsibility, his relationship to the whole of society, in addition to his purely artistic responsibility." p.278.

12 Carson, T. Closing the gap between research and practice: Conversation as a mode of doing research. Phenomenology & Pedagogy. 4, 2, 1986. p.78.

13 Freire, P. Conscientization. Conversion. Conn,W. Editor. NY Alba house. 1978. I shall use Paolo Freire's notion of Praxis here. I chose this quote as I feel it also effectively describes the praxis that is creativity:

> One of the distinguishing traits of man is that only he can stand off from the world and the reality of things around him. Only man can stand at a distance and admire it. As they objectivize or admire a thing (admire is taken here in the philosophical sense of ad-miring, looking

conversations. Conversation is a creative act pregnant with possibilities, both for further reflections but also significantly, for the action and reflection that is art. Conversation and reflection however, if they are to yield deep meaning cannot be undertaken without a conscious realization that such searchings may unearth a memory of suffering. My letters to and conversations with my co-conversants, may touch many sensitive areas, of this I am keenly aware. The deeply human art of conversation, with its intrinsically expressive sensibilities allows a creative yet sympathetic unearthing of meaning. Their responses to my own reflections, I hope will contain that same desire to understand.

In order to examine how the hermeneutic notion of conversation can aid our shared "journey" toward deeper understandings, I shall now describe more fully the the form and content of my research. The resonance that creativity finds within conversation, which provides a spur to artistic action, will be examined.

Creativity and Conversation.

In my research I shall meet people with whom I share a common enthusiasm--the desire to create meaningful visual art. My partners in discourse come from a variety of ethnic and artistic backgrounds. In order to aspire to a more profound and meaningful insight into what it means to be a creative Stranger in Canada, it has

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at), men are able to act consciously on the objectivized reality. That, precisely, is the human praxis, man's action-reflection on the world. p.297.

been necessary that the means by which I have endeavored to gain such insights be sympathetic to the spirit of the area into which I am inquiring. My own and my conversant's ideas and feelings will hopefully thus be honored in a discourse sharing of love in the expressive and liberating.

The intent then, has been that the discourse itself should be intrinsically expressive. Conversation as a mode of research, with its innate motivation to expressively communicate and share meaning, is entirely appropriate to the spirit of this researches' discourse. Carson, in Scenes from a conversation[14] (in press) comments: "The use of conversation as a mode of research is an attempt to enquire into practice in a way that is consistent with practice as the acts of the participants themselves. This is a form of interpretative research."

The philosophical art of hermeneutics helps make meaningful interpretation of the conversations achievable. While each conversation holds much within it that is unique, it addresses a shared notion of being-in-the-world. In philosophical hermeneutics this sharing is an essential pre-requisite without which understanding could not occur. A mutual sense of existence in the world means understanding is a goal we all share. This aspiration issues forth from misunderstanding, and the voyage towards meaning is initiated by what Gadamer calls: "The hermeneutical priority of the question."[15] The question's "genesis" derives from a

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14 Carson,T. Questioning Curriculum implementation. Scenes from a conversation Journal of curriculum theorizing. (in press) p.6 in draft.
15 Gadamer, H. Truth & Method . Crossroad, NY,1986. p.325.

negativity of experience from which misunderstanding has emerged. The question aids the voyage toward meaning, and: "The process of genuine questioning is inherently conversational. Participants in conversation seek to deepen their understanding of the topic of the conversation itself."[16] A genuine, open conversation promotes communication that attempts to illuminate something. This "something" requires that it be opened up by the question.

However, the intention that prompts someone to enter into conversation should not be formed by pre-formed standpoints, or opinions: "To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the partners in conversation are directed, as against the solidity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid."[17] For such an undertaking to bear fruit, it is necessary that our partner, "the other person [--] is with us."[18]

In this shared journey of the conversation a point of view should not be subsumed by conviction, and the "art of arguing". Rather, "[a] person who possesses the 'art' of questioning is a person who is able to prevent the suppression of questions by the dominant opinion."[19] The collective creation of reflections, having emerged from the dialectic of questioning within the conversation, ensure that: "What emerges in its truth is the Logos, which is neither mine nor yours, and hence so far transcends the subjective opinion of the

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16 Carson,T. Questioning Curriculum Implementation. Scenes from a conversation Journal of curriculum theorizing. (in press) p.6 in draft.
17 Gadamer, H. Truth & Method. Crossroad, NY,1986. p.330.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.

partners to the dialogue- that even the person leading the conversation is always ignorant."[20] Consequently a new understanding, a new creation of meaning occurs for us all as conversational partners. New ground is trod thanks to the dialectic process: "The art of conducting a conversation is also the art of seeing things in the unity of an aspect, it is the art of the formation of concepts as the working out of a common meaning."[21] Thus, the mutual open-mindedness of the partners-in-conversation has brought forth new understandings and new insights, whose creation is of essence, deeply artistic. As one of the partners-in-conversation I am with the others, one of the creators of this new understanding.

In a painting, meaning and understanding emerge from a reflection on the dynamic interplay of form and color whose content is more than the sum of its parts. As one brings one's own faculties into play, the painting's communication to one's own consciousness creates a unique new synthesis of meaning. With the conversation too, the dynamism of question and answer in a dialectic relationship brings to consciousness a new understanding which is far greater than the sum of the parts of the conversation: "The words spoken have a way of surprising both the 'researcher' and 'participant' with anticipated yet unexpected insights."[22]

Let us return to the metaphor of the painting. How does the artist come to create a particular painting? Why is it uniquely his/her creation? Surely, it is born of his/her experience of the world

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20 Ibid. p.331.
21 Ibid.
22 Carson, T. Questioning Curriculum Implementation. Scenes from a Conversation Journal of curriculum theorizing. (in press) p.7 in draft.

in its fullness, and is therefore a personal interpretation. So too, in the journey toward the question that prompts research: "There is an experience of the world which directs our attention to the question in the first place; autobiographical reflection is, therefore an important aspect of research in a conversational mode."[23] In other words, my own history brings me to the question and makes it meaningful. Along with this personal sense of meaning with which the question is imbued comes a commitment both to address the "problem", and to generate alternatives. The question becomes: "[A] matter of personal commitment and reflection on what someone should do."[24] Not only do I move toward the question, but also in my research, the question becomes a sharing with my co-conversants, so: "The participants in the conversation seek to deepen their understanding of the topic of the conversation itself."[25]

As the conversations unfold the underlying interrogative emerges, owing to our open exploration and sharing of the fullness of meaning. Understanding is allowed to emerge through the language. We are asking how the question is embodied in our talk. As the question gains presence, so fresh practical alternatives for the future concretize. The Japanese notion of "do" or way, is far more evocative of the process, and more freeing than the more restrictive idea of path, or route. As a dialectical alternative to more deterministic research approaches, it helps free co-conversants from the

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23 Carson, T. Closing the gap between research and practice: Conversation as a mode of doing research .Phenomenology & Pedagogy, 4.2, 1986. p.76.

24 Carson, T. Closing the gap between research and practice: Conversation as a mode of doing research Phenomenology& Pedagogy, 4.2, 1986. p.78.

25 Carson, T. Scenes from a Conversation. Journal of curriculum theorizing, (in press) p.6 in draft.

conceptual and methodological fetters that hinder aspirations to an emancipatory aesthetic. It is a creative way to approach creativity.

First contacts.

The aforementioned moral commitment informed my introductory writings to my partners in conversation. Prior to the first conversation I sent a brief letter and biography,[26] in order that each person have a notion of what had brought me to ask the question, and to meeting them. In addition, I enclosed some questions. These questions raised notions of strangeness, membership, and art's place in such phenomena. I sought to open the discourse, in the same way that a painter must make his first mark on the canvas, with a shape but no pre-formed end in sight .

I was aware that a whole constellation of feelings and thoughts from other parts of our lives would color our talk. My role of empathetic participant, actively involved in the creation of a shared meaning, needed to be tempered with the critically awareness of a sensitive researcher. Hidden intentions and emotions would color the dialogues. Consequently, I would need to be critical and selective with the text of our conversation.

A Note on Typography and Grammar.

I have varied the typography in later thematic reflections[27] in order to differentiate between the quotes of each partner in

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26 See Appendix A.
27 See Chapters 7-11 inclusive.

conversation. In other words for verbatim quotes of my partner's words, I shall for each use different styles and sizes of type.

I shall conform to accepted grammatical rules, with two exceptions. This is when I write of the the "Stranger" or "Home Acts". I use capitals in order to emphasize the significance of their meaning within the context of my thesis. For further information, see the chapters entitled "Discourse on Strangeness", and "Home Acts".

Significance of Study.

This study:

1) explores to what extent the Canadian acculturative process, socially and educationally stifles or encourages the reclamation of self through a creative statement of personal history.

2) examines to what extent notions of multiculturalism are really brought to being in the Canadian art/art education context.

3) adds to the literature of ethnic creativity in Canadian education and society, and how that artistic contribution further enriches the cultural mosaic.

4) contributes to an understanding of how feelings of cultural isolation manifest themselves in the creative lifeworld of the "artistic-immigrant".

Ethical considerations.

i) Consent.

Participants will have full explanations of the type of information being collected. They will be in full cognizance of the nature of the study being undertaken and will be totally voluntary participants. As such they are free to leave at any stage of the undertaking. Photography and audio taping will only take place with their express permission.

ii) Anonymity/Confidentiality

Participants will be assured as to the confidentiality of the study. At no time will participant's identities be made public. I will communicate with those involved at all stages of the endeavor the amount and type of information being released for research use.

iii) Limitations of the Study.

1. It has not been my intention to deal with ethnicity directly in this study. Rather, I have attempted to deal with aspects of personal lived-ethnicity through my use of the Stranger archetype, as it is expressed in western culture. I also feel that the choice of this figure has enabled me to speak to a shared experience of strangeness that has meaning to us all, member or stranger.

2. Nevertheless, as I describe this notion of strangeness, and its meaning for us as creative educators, I do so with the awareness that, just as there is a shared notion of strangeness expressed here, there is a whole constellation of other alienations which I have not

dealt with. To try and encompass all the many strangenesses that exist in the lifeworld would in my opinion, make the parameters of this research inoperably wide.

CHAPTER THREE

A Discourse on Strangeness.

Introduction

The three people with whom I chose to converse were all artistically active immigrants to Canada. What meaning does strangeness and alienation have in their lives, creatively and psychically? Were they still Strangers in Canada, or do they now feel like fully fledged "members"? In this chapter, I shall describe the qualities of the Stranger, and its meaning in the context of my discourse. Finally, I shall suggest how a Stranger's perspective on our lifeworld may lead to a mutual perceptual and creative enrichment, which can help to broaden our understanding of art in education.

Who is the "Stranger-in-our-midst"?

To be at home in a place, to be of the soil[1] of that land is, in itself a unique and much-treasured experience. The bond which for example the Haida have for their Pacific coast homeland and all that it entails, speaks of an insoluble link to a place, and a particular sense of being. The member of a culture: "Accepts the ready-made standardized scheme of the cultural pattern handed down to him by ancestors, teachers and authorities as an unquestioned and

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[1] Levine, Donald N., Editor. Simmel, G. Part III. Social types. 10. The Stranger. On Individuality and Social Forms. University of Chicago press, London, 1971. p.403

unquestionable guide in all the situations which normally occur within the social world."[2]

What though, of those within our culture who do not accept the "ready-made, standardized scheme", and whose sense of culture was contributed to by "ancestors, teachers and authorities" in a foreign land? Alternatively, what befalls the homecomer who returns to his/her place of birth and can no longer, thanks to his/her experiences, unquestioningly accept the ways of life previously uncritically accepted? Thanks to his/her interim adjustments to the ways of another place, the old ways are no longer implicit: "To make it meaningful again he must interpret and re-order what he sees in the light of his changed experience."[3] Many emigrants, when they return to or "dwell on" their birth-place and what it means, undergo this reappraisal in the light of new knowledge and understandings.

Prior to this experience, the homecomer-as-stranger has had to make ontological re-adjustments in his/her attempts to integrate into a new culture. A sense of alienation from one's own biographic history can generate an often profound existential crisis. One who was once a member of a culture discovers s/he has been "dis-membered" from his/her own cultural corpus. The individual is a Stranger to him/herself, just as s/he is to both his/her lived-worlds. As with Mersault in Camus' L'Etranger (1954), the Stranger does not share the conventional wisdom toward the common modus vivendi:

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[2] Broderson, A., Editor. Schutz, A. The Stranger. Collected papers two. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1971, p.95.

[3] Greene, M. Teacher as Stranger. Educational Philosophy for the Modern Age. Belmont, California. Wadsworth, 1973. p.268.

> At this time I noticed that everyone was meeting one another, asking questions and conversing, as if they were in a club where one is happy to be among people who share your interests. I began to understand then why I had the impression that I wasn't needed, sort of like an intruder. (translation: Kate Griffith).[4]

How then could we describe this notion of the Stranger for the purposes of this discussion? In this context: " Stranger shall mean an Adult individual of our times and civilization who tries to be permanently accepted, or at least tolerated by the group whom he approaches. The outstanding example is that of the immigrant."[5] This definition notwithstanding however, I shall stray for a while in order to look at some broader cultural conceptions as to the meaning of strangeness. Here perhaps, lay some clues which point toward the Stranger's "subversive" potential to undermine the taken-for-granted version of reality.

In western society the Stranger, the alien, has long played two roles. S/he is both a figure of romance, and a figure of scorn. Literature is full of such figures who excite our envy, and have visited upon them, our victimizations. Mersault[6] is a man who feels no need to be bound by society's constraints, and is consequently progressively penalized for such impudence. Carmen[7] is a dangerously sensual figure who represents much of what our

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[4] Camus, Albert. Kate Griffith translator. The Stranger. University press of America, 1982. p.68.

[5] Broderson, A., Editor. Schutz, A. The Stranger, Collected papers two. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague. 1971. p.91.

[6] Camus, Albert. L'Etranger. NY, Vintage books 1954.

[7] Merimeé, P. Carmen. Collection Pastels. Editions du Panthion, Paris, 1947. "C'était une beauté étrange et sauvage. Ses yeux surtout avaient une expression a la fois volupteuse et farouche que je n'ai trouvée depuis a aucun regard humain." p.42.

patriarchal society has regarded as the threatening carnal "otherness"[8] of women[9]. Both these literary characters represent the Stranger's role *within* our society, the Stranger-in-our-midst. His/her very ubiquity in the arts of the west, from the Pied piper of Hamelin[10] to the Lone Ranger, points to the symbolic strength of the Stranger as the Other, an object of both romance and persecution. The traditional exclusion of such figures from society's mainstream paradoxically speaks ever-more strongly of their inclusion in our lifeworld. Schutz likens him/her to an actor: "Jumping from the stalls to the stage, the former onlooker becomes a member of the cast, and participates henceforth in the action in progress."[11]

Nevertheless, the Stranger figure still personifies much that is alien. S/he is:

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[8] De Beauvoir, S. III, Mythes. Le Deuxième sexe. Gallimand, 1949. De Beauvoir speaks of: "l'hésitation du male entre la peur et le désir" of woman. p.208. Lacan too speaks of this desire for the Other. He points to a "scopic drive", a lodging of desire in looking expressed in: Wright, Elizabeth. Psychoanalytic criticism: Theory in Practice. Methuen, London and NY. 1984:

> A subjects search for a fantasy that represents for him/her the lost phallus. The eyes, as one of the modes of access for libido to explore the world, become the instruments for this drive. The sexual drive is now deflected from the childs primal object, the mother, into seeking an object that is always out of reach, to be found only by discovering its trace as an absence in every signifier. The eye is not merely an organ of perception but also an organ for pleasure. There is a dialectic of the eye and the gaze. The eye, as caught up in the Symbolic Order and the gaze, as pursuing a narcissistic fantasy-for every object, subjected as it is to the scopic drive, partakes of the conflict between imaginary fantasy and the demands of the symbolic, the desire of the Other. p.117.

[9] De Beauvoir, Simone. III. Mythes. Le Deuxième sexe. Gallimand, 1949 : "Il veut que la femme. . . demeure étrangère." p.266. "Elle est tout l'autre." p.277.

[10] from Browning's The pied piper of Hamelin. Oxford University press, 1962.

" 'Come in'-The Mayor cried, looking bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure,
. . . There was no guessing his kith and kin."

[11] Broderson, A., Editor. Schutz, A. The Stranger, Collected papers two. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague,1971. p.97.

> The person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the potential wanderer. Although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a particular spatial group, his position in this group is determined by the fact that he has not belonged in it from the beginning.[12]

His/her belonging, in fact, is determined perversely by his/her not belonging! "The unity of nearness and remoteness [means that] he, who is close by, is far, and strangeness means that he, who also is far, is actually near."[13]

Traditionally, the Stranger may have been a merchant, story-teller, or refugee. S/he may have been a mercenary, a tinker, or a fool. In contemporary terms, the common conception of the Stranger is of the immigrant. As a newcomer, s/he finds him/herself quite literally "landless":

> The Stranger is by nature no 'owner of soil', not only in the physical, but also in the figurative sense of a life substance which is fixed, if not in a point in space, at least in an ideal point of the social environment. Although in more intimate relations he may develop all kinds of charm and significance, as long as he is considered a stranger in the eyes of the other, he is not an owner of soil.[14]

Why then, does the immigrant become consigned to this role? How is the Stranger made strange?

The Stranger first and foremost is from the soil of a foreign land. His/her roots in that soil are shrouded in mystery to others.

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[12] Levine, Donald N., Editor. Simmel, G. Part III. Social types. 10. The Stranger. On Individuality and Social Forms. University of Chicago press, London, 1971. p402.
[13] Ibid. p.402.
[14] Ibid. p.403.

This lack of a shared history with most "natives" of the new homeland means that there is an ignorance of the Stranger's past on the part of the members of that culture. This can engender a dislocation from the historic biographies of those "strange" people. The member's response is to resort to the cliches, the archetypes, in order to describe the enigmatic qualities of the newcomers: "The strangeness of origin is or could be common to many strangers. For this reason, strangers are not really conceived as individuals, but as strangers of a particular type."[15]

This tendency to resort to types in order to describe the qualities of the Stranger inevitably leads to objectification. Meaning's content surrenders to form, and the Stranger's being in that culture is reduced to a fixed configuration. This is the shape of the: " Abstract nature of the relation to him. That is, with the stranger one has only certain more general qualities in common, whereas the relation to more organically connected persons is based on the commonness of specific differences from merely general features."[16]

Consequently our relationship with the immigrant is of necessity, based on those few things that we have in common. A working relationship is established in social and occupational spheres in the absence of a common biography born of a historically shared understanding. This relationship however, tends to emphasize the shallowness of personal communication:

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15 Ibid. p.407.
16 Ibid. p.405.

> The stranger is close to us, insofar as we feel between him and ourselves common features of a national, social, occupational, or generally human nature. He is far from us, insofar as those common features extend beyond him and us, and connect us only because they connect a great many people.[17]

The relationship of the Stranger and the member of the socially dominant group is a tense one, fraught with the potential danger of mutual misunderstanding and suspicions which tend to reinforce a distant, abstract relationship: "Although some qualities of them characterize all relationships, a special proportion and reciprocal tension produce the particular, formal relation to the stranger."[18]

Nevertheless, one should not mistakenly assume that the member-Stranger dialogue is a totally fixed, unchanging one. As generations of immigrants to Canada will attest, being cast in the role of Stranger often indicates the commencement of a journey toward acceptance in a new culture. Strangeness after all, is not a quality unique to the immigrant experience, it is a factor in all relationships: "Strangeness and familiarity are not limited to the social field, but are general categories of our interpretation of the world."[19]

The Stranger has historically often possessed a uniquely invaluable role in society, a role which gained biblical recognition. The Samaritan,[20] a figure to be shunned, acts in such a way as to bring cultural stereotypes into question: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: And when he saw him, he had

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17 Ibid. p.406.
18 Ibid. p.407.
19 Broderson, A., Editor. Schutz, A. The Stranger. Collected papers two. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1971. p.105.
20 Luke 10, Chapter 10, Verse 33. New Testament of the Bible.

compassion on him." His very peripherality and detachment from the mainstream has brought hitherto unquestioned social mores to critical consciousness. As a marginal entity, the Stranger is afforded the opportunity to view the culture with an "objectively" distanced, but sensitized perspective:

> The Stranger is not radically committed to the unique ingredients and peculiar tendencies of the group, and therefore approaches them with the specific attitude of 'objectivity'; but objectivity does not simply involve passivity and detachment. It is a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement.[21]

I do not seek to use objectivity here in any positivist sense. Rather the notion of distanced perspective, which could be likened to an artist drawing a still-life for example, is more apt for the purposes of this discussion. Indeed, this kind of objectivity has afforded artists the opportunity to make profound creative statements on facets of their own, or foreign cultures. Suffice it to say, as is exemplified in the work of Kafka, when he creates insightful images of a mythical Amerika(1949),[22] in order to describe themes of exile and corruption: " He is freer, practically and theoretically; he surveys conditions with less prejudice.[23] His criteria for them are more

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[21] Levine, Donald N., Editor. Simmel, G. Part III. Social types. 10. The Stranger.
On individuality and social forms. University of Chicago press, London, 1971. p.404

[22] Kafka, F. Amerika. London, Secker & Warburg, 1949.
"That street was the channel for a constant stream of traffic, which seen from above, looked like an inextricable confusion, for ever newly improvised." p.50.

[23] Gadamer, H. Truth & Method. Crossroad, NY, 1986. I interpret prejudice in this context in its older legal sense, meaning: "A judgement that is given before all the elements that determine a situation have been fully examined." p.240.

general and more objective ideas; he is not tied down in his action by habit, piety and precedent."[24]

The creative individual particularly, can discover profound meaning thanks to an alienated perception of a culture. Additionally, his/her own alienation can enable him/her to assume a kind of "privileged-confidante" role which yields special insights into a culture, insights denied to more societally entrenched individuals: "The Stranger often receives the most surprising openness, confidences which sometimes have the quality of a confessional and which would be carefully withheld from a more closely related person."[25] Notions of Stranger and strangeness then, are partly born of the tension between his/her own sense or peripherality and the members contextualization of him/her in cliched terms. Nevertheless, developing within this feeling of isolation is an embryonic sense of belonging, which can grow in the consciousness of the immigrant and the native alike.

The sense of alienation, of non-belonging, is a condition in which a person's own sense of being-in-the-world comes under self-conscious scrutiny. The sensitization which this regard creates enables the person to not only examine his/her own sense of life-journey, but also significantly to reflect "objectively" on that voyage, from the soil of the homeland toward a new kind of belonging in a new country. Such a biography demands a voice, an expression, and

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24 Levine, Donald N., Editor. Simmel, G. Part III. Social types. 10. The Stranger.
On individuality and social forms. University of Chicago press, London, 1971. p.405.
25 Ibid. p.404.

expression is maieutic of creativity. It is the creative expression of a person's biography, their life-journey, and its power to liberate with which my thesis is concerned. The following questions will be raised within the text of my conversations:

-What is the journey between Stranger and Member(ship) like?
-What does it mean to be a Stranger?
-What can the biography, the creative expression of Self, tell us about the experience of Strange-ness? Is this act of creativity also a liberating act?

"To take a stranger's vantage point is to look inquiringly and wonderingly on the world in which one lives."[26] Emerging from the preceding quote is the idea that if we seek to understand the Stranger's "vantage point" we can, with his/her help inquire and wonder more at our lifeworld, gaining a richer conception of the dynamic between Stranger and member which exists for most of us in our thoughts and relationships.

Notions of "Bildung", and its meaning within my discourse.

The hermeneutic "bridge"[27] represents a spanning by illuminative understanding, of the chasms of alienation which prevent the Stranger from interpreting and understanding anew his/her life history. Humankind is together a multitude of cultures.

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[26] Greene, M. Teacher as Stranger. Educational Philosophy for the Modern Age.
Belmont, California. Wadsworth, 1973. p.267.
[27] See Chapters 11, 12 for a further expansion of this idea.

In order to gain understanding of the feeling of culture that the individual holds, I feel that it would be appropriate at this juncture to establish a notion of culture in its personal sense.

The idea of "Bildung" Gadamer writes, is: "Intimately associated with the idea of culture and designated primarily the properly human way of developing one's natural talents and capacities."[28] It is an ever-unfolding process of being-in-becoming which: " Grows out of the inner process of formation and cultivation, and therefore remains in a constant state of further continued Bildung."[29] This personal formation of a sense of culture gleaned from outside oneself, becomes internalized to such an extent that the influences that shape you become your own unique "property".

Without Bildung, wo/man is encased in the particularity of experience. S/he is unformed, "ungebildet" (p13): "He cannot turn his gaze from himself toward something universal, from which his own particular being is determined in measure and proportion."[30] Those with a sense of Bildung can regard both their own biographies, but also their particular biographies' place in the experience of being Human. A Stranger, in the very act of uprooting him/herself must escape this unquestioned sense of existence, this particularity of his/her native soil. S/he must make the first steps toward a new land. There, just as scholars sought to discover the essence of the human spirit in the classical world, the Stranger in his/her sense of alienation from "belonging", tries to: " Seek [his/her] own in the alien,

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28 Gadamer, H. Truth & Method. Crossroad, NY, 1986. p.11.
29 Ibid. p.12.
30 Ibid. p.13.

to become at Home in it, [which] is the basic movement of Spirit, whose being is only return to itself from what is other."[31].

The return to itself of the spirit, to become at home in the new land, is the journey of a Stranger towards a new sense of belonging. This is a movement toward a re-integration of spirit, of "de-alienation". As Gadamer notes: "The return to oneself, which presumes a prior alienation, constitutes the essence of Bildung."[32] So the self-conscious immigrant in leaving his/her origins, and "sprouting new roots", undertakes both a physical and a spiritual voyage, where an alienated, sensitized self-consciousness ever nurtures the growth of Bildung. This growth of a self-conscious, "cultured" self, is not self-centered. It has a sense of being-in-the-world with others, a sense of expansion rather than narrowing.

Creative Strangers

A cornerstone of my discussion is that a person's biography seeks a voice, an intrinsically creative expression of the world as lived. It is an ever new re-creation of a person's sense of biography, a part of their life-journey. The creative arts can be an ideal outlet for such creative expression of biography, and as such have a valuable part to play in making meaningful the lifeworld of the Stranger. How then, can the art-educator unearth these meanings, which give such liberation to the free, expressive voice of the Stranger?

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31 Ibid. p.15.
32 Ibid.

Strangeness paradoxically, is no stranger to any of us. As aforementioned, it is present in all our lives. The art educator undertakes a conversation with the student creative-Stranger as a Stranger him/herself. There is mutuality in that discourse, which art can enrich and generate. The biography of the creative Stranger, its expressive rendering in words, or in any of humanity's multitude of artforms, can make fruitful our knowing of what it is to feel like a Stranger. Yet, it can also enrich the Stranger's own understanding of his/her Life-journey: "Through his[her] imagination, [s]he [is] able to restore to life a mere fragment of the past and create significance where there had been a void. That significance, now calls out to the person willing to look through his own eyes."[33]

A "voicing" of ones biography then, is of itself a creative, communicative act. This expression of biography however, can only be a selective one. A person is not after all, a mere recording machine. Memory comes into play as a significant factor, and as such should be dealt with in this discussion. Memory's selectivity is an intrinsic quality of personal creativity. It cannot be seen as either a record, or a personal aptitude. Gadamer recognizes this, observing that: "Remembering, forgetting and recalling belong to the Historical reconstitution of man and are themselves part of his History and his Bildung."[34]

An individual may remember particular kinds of things, and not others. Some events are lovingly recalled, others hastily

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[33] Greene, M. Teacher as Stranger. Educational Philosophy for the Modern Age. Belmont, California. Wadsworth, 1973. p.298.
[34] Gadamer, H. Truth & Method. Crossroad, NY, 1986. p.16.

banished. Forgetting is not simply an error, a fault of mind. It can provide the space for new insights: "Only by forgetting does the mind have the chance of total renewal, the capacity to see everything with fresh eyes, so what is long familiar combines with the new into a many-leveled unity."[35] Thus, the very partiality of memory, with its elements of old and recent experience, can allow the Stranger to make meaningful his/her new reality in a unique expressive synthesis with personal history. By forgetting, the Stranger can see his/her new Lifeworld with fresh eyes, whilst retaining memories of his/her old Lifeworld which can still have relevance and meaning.

In an alienation from a sense of cultural continuity, the Stranger encounters: "[A] consciousness of loss and estrangement in relation to tradition, which [in their sensitized condition of mind] rouses them to Hermeneutical reflection."[36] In the expression of life-history that a creative Stranger makes, his/her own biography indivisibly linked with the material manifestation of his/her own creativity, can be rendered anew. Like the allegory of Hegel's oft-quoted fruit plucked from the tree:

> As the girl who presents the plucked fruit is more than nature that presented it in the first place with all its conditions and elements--Trees, Air, Light and so on, insofar as she combines all of these in a higher way in the light of self-consciousness in her eyes and in her gestures",[37]

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35 Ibid. p.16.
36 Gadamer, H. Truth & Method. Crossroad, NY, 1986. p.147.
37 Ibid. p.150.

--so the creative Stranger can fashion a biographic understanding of far greater richness than was hitherto possible, in the illumination provided by new experiences, creatively expressed.

As the Stranger reflects upon his/her past life and artwork, a complete, unchanged description thereof is not what occurs. Rather, the life/art events of the past are reinterpreted and recreated in a form meaningful to present experience. This is how the exigencies of the past render themselves useful and relevant to the present, and to the future. The art of the Stranger then, is a coming to terms for the practitioner. For us as viewers, it is something more. It is an opportunity to understand more deeply and humanely.

In my following thematic interpretations of our discourse, my reflections are implicitly informed by certain questions. I shall consider to what extent the immigrant artist ever finds a clear opportunity for a creative coming to terms. What can stifle this process, and what are the consequences to the Stranger of such preventions? Given the probability that such barriers to expression will occur, I shall inquire as to how s/he can use his/her creative voice to enact an escape from such oppression. Finally, I shall inquire into how this escape may lead us toward an art that can make all our lives qualitatively freer.

CHAPTER FOUR

Themes

Partners in Conversation: Evelyn, Mitsu, Sima--and Cameron

The three people with whom I have conversed are all active visual artists, though all are working in different creative areas. Their cultural and ideological perspectives reflect a similar diversity. In order to "add flesh" to my thematic descriptions of their biographies, I shall first introduce each person through a brief description of their artwork, and their other involvements.

Evelyn

Evelyn, now forty, came to Canada from the Philippines eighteen years ago. Her first years here were spent in Montreal, at University studying English literature. Divorced with one child, a teenage daughter, she works in Edmonton as a free-lance graphic designer as well as participating in many aspects of third world development work. Involved actively in immigrant and third world affairs, she is a committed fund-raiser and organizer. She is a producer of etchings which contain a strong sense of her "Filipino-ness". A concern with the social strife and inequality which wracks the contemporary Philippines is a constant and heartfelt theme. Experiences as a Canadian, and the change in focus that has ensued, form a special sensibility of her work. Her prints draw their imagery from the symbolisms of the Philippines and the West. Evelyn is committed to her newer sense of identity, that of the Filipina-Canadian: " I would like to be accepted on my own terms, that my

personal history, foreign vocabulary, and novel ways be acknowledged as part of my identity even though my years in Canada have somehow transformed me into an oddity; that of a Canadian-Filipina."

Mitsu

Mitsu came to Canada from Japan in his early thirties, a little over a decade ago. At first, he continued in his business as a successful architect, but became progressively more disillusioned with many aspects of his profession. He had become more involved in his own painting. He found it a highly satisfying means of expressing his own changing sense of self in what he saw as a creatively stimulating prairie landscape. Consequently, he took the bold step of devoting himself full time to the pursuit of his painting. Mitsu firmly believes in the notion that the individual artist has a special, sensitized "eye" on the world. He attempts to describe his own changing world in his paintings, many-layered collages of paper and paint executed after a period of meditation: "What I'm doing is not to try and impose strict meaning, I'm trying to expose myself, my coming to Canada. People and things, I interpret." His work has a spiritual quality, synthesizing his sense of being both Canadian and Japanese, together in a mythic landscape. He describes his artwork as a "sedimentation of my soul".

Sima

Sima is a photographer and painter from Iran, now in her mid-thirties, who has been in Edmonton for seven years. Before that, she

lived and studied in England. She is an active, well known local photographer, producing works which reflect her strong social conscience. Her concern is that she produce in her work a strong statement on the inequities of the contemporary social order. Through the photographic medium, she attempts to raise awareness of the plight of the disadvantaged, the voiceless of society: " Can it make the people who don't care, care a little bit more? Yes, it can. I think you should try, because how many times can people turn their head, or eyes? Even once, if they turn their head, they start thinking about it; that's enough, I think." Her paintings though, and some photographs, are more lyrical and poetic. Sima's more introspective side emerges, describing a personal sense of being. She evocatively describes the many facets of her existence, as she considers what it means to be a Canadian, an Iranian, an exile.

What is being a Stranger *Like* ? Descriptions of Strangeness.

Human language, and in particular the "art" of conversation, is rich in metaphor, which gives access to deeper meaning. Ricoeur writes: "A linguistic imagination. . . generates and regenerates meaning through the living power of metaphoricity."[1] In my reflections on the text of our conversations, the richness of metaphor yielded much in the way of new understandings. Evelyn, Mitsu and Sima all generated metaphors for their biographical experiences in

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[1] Kearney, R., Compiler. Ricoeur, Paul. The Creativity of Language. Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers . Manchester University Press, 1984. p.17.

their conversations. For each of them, their descriptions coalesced to form a main image around which others clustered. A central metaphor seemed to crystallize their existence as creative Strangers. To add focus to the meanings that emerged from our talk, I shall introduce my conversations with each of them with this central metaphor. I shall develop the metaphor very briefly in order to render it less enigmatic in its meaning. Then, I will refer to one of the more significant of the secondary "clustered" images. This secondary metaphor juxtaposed with the central one will represent each person's thematic life-journey, as interpreted in my reflections.

First however, I shall briefly describe my own thematic journey in a similar manner, from my homeland--to a particular sense of belonging in Canada. As an active co-creator of meaning in the text of our conversations and reflections, my own biographic voice has a part to play in its contribution to the meaning of the Stranger's life-journey. My description of my life-journey alludes to how I came to ask the question of my Thesis. It also serves as a thematic introduction to the life-journeys of my partners-in-conversation.

Cameron: Stepping off the well-trod path--Voyage to a Question

Embeddedness

Prior to living in Edmonton, I was employed as an art teacher in a high school in the northernmost corner of England. I taught sculpture, drawing and painting, enjoying this opportunity to explore many creative areas with my students. In addition, I was able to

pursue my own artwork in my spare time. Creatively, I was pursuing a direction continued from early art school days.

I was indeed cozily embedded in a region with which I was familiar, in a convivial workplace where I felt secure, and amongst students and staff with whom I shared a similar world-view. My method of teaching, and its substance, was directly attributable to my own personal "tradition", in which their had been few breaks. My life in this community seemed to stretch before me along a well-trod, almost pre-ordained, path. I and those around me shared common goals and assumptions about "how to live life".

Hemmed-in

This taken-for-grantedness was progressively undermined by my decision to leave Carlisle, and come to Edmonton. After much soul-searching, my decision to leave came about for a multitude of reasons. Perhaps the most significant was a growing sense of what could be described as feeling socially "hemmed-in". I felt Canada offered me a wealth of opportunities which would remain unfulfilled if I were to remain in Britain and follow the path of least resistance. Edmonton promised a new direction in life, and a chance to succeed--or fail.

A shared way

My own belief in my mostly unquestioned life and career goals was brought into conscious examination, brought to the surface. My relationships with colleagues, friends and loved ones assumed a new

tension. I swung between feeling like another "rat leaving the sinking ship", and a betrayer of friends and family. People were sometimes encouraging-- sometimes vaguely resentful, when I voiced my intentions. At first I was mystified by this reaction, until I recalled my own response to friends of mine who voiced their intentions of coming to live in Canada. I had felt I recalled, threatened by their move. I had implicitly asked these questions of them, and myself: *What is wrong with our shared way of life that you should try another? What is wrong with us as people that you should wish to leave us?*

A world re-viewed

Their leaving created discomfort in those around them-- perhaps because it had forced us to a painful re-examination of our hitherto shared way of life, and ourselves as personalities. They had sensitized us to our individual sense of being in the world. An uncomfortable occurrence, which was soon forgotten after their departure in favour of more mundane preoccupations.

Having myself chosen to come to Canada I was again sensitized, but to a far greater extent this time. I was loosening my sense of cultural belonging in anticipation of finding new connections, in what for me truly was the New World. Inadvertently, I was creating that same tension in those close to me that my migrant friends had previously created. I was forcing them to unearth things about themselves which had previously been "out of sight and out of mind".

Dislocations

My leaving decision subjected me to the scrutiny of an inner-directed eye. This gaze was unfaltering as I crossed the Atlantic, and settled in Edmonton. Western Canada is predominantly English-speaking, and it is often swiftly assumed that an English-speaking migrant will have only a small sense of cultural dislocation. This is not completely the case however. To draw a jocular analogy, it is rather like having had one drink too many at a party where you know nobody. Conversations with people become confusing and meaningless. Words don't carry quite the same meanings, and a slight sense of anxiety and disorientation hovers.

Re-adjustments

My sensitization grew as I encountered the problems of living in another country. Anxious to share in a sense of shared experience, I began to participate in the activities of the University of Alberta's "International Student's Organization", subsequently becoming its publicity organizer. I became strikingly aware of how small my own problems were in comparison to those people from non-English speaking countries. With often only a smattering of English, they had to try and make sense of a living and working environment where the most basic of their assumptions could be undermined, and consequently needed to be interpreted anew. One particular episode which brought this point home to me was when a group of international students in an orientation seminar, were told that in Canada it was considered socially taboo to sit down with strangers and chat amicably with them. The looks of surprise which greeted this statement of one of the social mores of the English-speaking

world awakened me in a simple but powerful way, to the problems that the Stranger has adjusting to a new way of life.

A new regime

Creatively, on coming to Canada, all was not as it had at first seemed. I slowly became aware of different hidden agendas which were at work. Conversations with new immigrants to Canada highlighted to what extent these "creative Strangers" felt they were functioning under a new aesthetic regime. They were experiencing a cultural and creative fracturing as new pressures made their presence felt, and they responded to a new way of doing art.

Sensitizations

For myself as a young art student, I had been encouraged to orient myself to the "avant garde" notion of the artist as an individual on the fringes of society. From there the reasoning went, I could call to consciousness that which most members of society kept hidden. My creative faculties would range more freely, freed from the taken for grantedness which limits creativity. Although this may be a suspect notion, a sensitizing did take place. The lifeworld took on a different hue. Like an immigrant (as I discovered later, on coming to Canada) I had cast myself in the role of Stranger.

In such a role few things can be taken for granted or assumed. Much was brought to conscious consideration that would otherwise have remained hidden. This was an experience in my life which I found both disturbing and enlightening--an experience which I did

not forget, and which gained ever-more depth of meaning and significance for me when I came to Canada.

Reflections on strangeness

My wife Poo Chee and I, often talk and reflect on our experiences as relative newcomers to Canada. As immigrants, our talk often returns to memories of other places--the sights, sounds, smells--a world of impressions. Nevertheless, these reveries just as inevitably return us to our life in Canada. It seems as if we are re-viewing, reworking our memories in the light of a changed experience. We are both involved in a variety of creative endeavours, and this synthesis of recall seems to irrepressibly emerge in our artwork. A creative synthesis of past and present issues forth, as our response to being in a new cultural milieu.

A questioning stance: Toward a question

In "moving off the well-trod path", and coming to Canada, my life has undergone many changes. My sensitization first, to the previously unquestioned way of life in England, and then the "new world" of Canada, has led me to question many things about my own life, and also the ways of life I find in this country. In an effort partly to find greater meaning in my own experience as a Stranger, and to attempt a resolution of some of the conflicts of this way of being in the world, I came seemingly inexorably in retrospect, to the question of my thesis.

Drawing from my own experiences as a newcomer to Canada, I have come to feel that a creative migrant can speak to us all of what

it means to be a Stranger in Canada. They speak through their art, but they can also voice their experience in a unique synthesis of words and images. This I believe, can enrich understandings of what being a Stranger means in the cultural and creative arena, and how it has significance for us as creative educators.

And so to the thematic journeys of my partners in conversation . . .

"The Ox came to Mind first." Etching.

As we entered into conversation, both Evelyn and I were highly conscious of the sensitivity of our discourse. The pain of leaving ones homeland and loved ones informed our conversations. It was indeed, the awareness that we both had encountered these feelings which enabled our talk to be undertaken in a spirit of shared understanding. For Evelyn, with many years passing since her departure from her native home, the need to rediscover her own *"Root* [s]"[2] has taken on much significance. The need after that angst-loaded separation from loved ones years before, was to: *"Go back without bitterness."* A physical and spiritual journey; a healing and a reconciliation.

She felt that our conversation was allowing her to reflect upon her life at a timely juncture, whilst she was attempting to resolve her very different and distinct worlds of experience. Indeed, Evelyn was highly aware of the dissonances in her lifeworld. Presenting graphically the fragmentation of identity that beset her in the contemporary western cultural milieu, she asked: *"I wonder right now while you are interviewing me , do you see before you a Filipina, a Chinese, a Canadian, a traveller, a mother, an organizer, an artist, a designer, or a printmaker? And then, does it matter?"*

There was a tentativeness, almost a mutual suspicion about our talk. Evelyn jokingly compared us to two animals unfamiliar to each other, placed in the same zoo enclosure. Warily we circled around each other, sniffing the air, watching. Slowly our suspicion was abating, as the sight and sound of the other became less threatening.

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2 Evelyn's own words are henceforth italicized.

The signs we gave were becoming more conciliatory, and less defensive.

And so we talked. We talked about many things; art, politics, gardening, the weather. The ebb and flow of our words found their course. Both my own desire and hers, was that the tension of research, with its connotations of intrusion and a technical manipulation, would not mar the joyful creativity of conversation. As we talked, the shared concern which had led to our meeting bubbled up in our words.

Sub-theme number one: "Separating and coming together."

A notion of separation and coming together became a recurrent theme; the contradictory need to both belong and to be apart. It was an idea which we returned to frequently in our conversations. Evelyn spoke of a *"constant going back and forth"* , where memories, ideas, feelings of another lifeworld are lost or clung to. With separation I wondered, did there come a quest for identity and freedom (the desire to feel different) as paradoxically, one sought to discover where one belonged?

The need to *"pull away"* from what one was once *"joined"* may have alluded to a number of things. It seemed for Evelyn, to denote a painful wrenching from what was held dear, in a quest for personal freedom. The *"psyching-up"* she needed in order to pull away from what she held dear, further emphasized her feeling of bonding, and inertia.

The need to "come together " emerged as a potent force. Such powerful images as "*dig deep* [to the] *root* ", and *"pull back the veil "*

emerged from our conversation, as metaphors for a kind of "return to belonging". What prompted this need to go back and *"touch the core"*, to pull back the veil of myth, nostalgia and forgetfulness draped across her memory? Drawing back the veil spoke of an exposing, a sensitivity, a return to an experiential discomfiture to which the expressions dig deep and touch the core, perhaps alluded. Were these references to memories of the traumas of leaving the comforts of home? Was this sense informed by a knowing that in creative and psychic terms at least, home had always to be returned to? The notions of digging deep and touching the core held within them a sense of discovery and enlightenment, and an almost spiritual sense of origin. Shades of Mother Earth, or indeed Gaia.[3] Was this idea an atavistic illusion, a desire[4] for something behind the veil that had never existed? Alternatively, did it speak to something more physical, a sense of a return to belonging in one particular place?

Evelyn described her notion of separation and then re-combination with a cultural "corpus". She employed her model of the Yin and Yang, with its understanding of movement with dynamic balance, and harmony in heterogeneity. With serious enthusiasm, hands describing arcs, spheres and circles in the air, she explained: *"Separation. . . it's like the Yin and Yang. . . positive and negative forces, you need to separate to become whole; you sometimes feel without.. When you separate you get a sense of loss.* [but] *your perception, you're adding to yourself,* [it] *makes you more complete.*

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3 See Lovelock,J.E. Gaia, a new look at Life on Earth. Oxford University press, 1979.

4 See Chapter three, footnote eight, on Lacan's notion of the desire of the Other.

Maybe a lot gets replaced. A sense of whole being is something external." Evelyn's notion of this dynamic Yin and Yang relationship spoke of a mobility between strange and familiar, home and "abroad" (in both its older, and more everyday senses).

Sub-theme number two. "Senses and sensitivity".

The contradictions of her creative Stranger's lifeworld were an evocative, and persistant theme. These ideas, exciting to our intellects, often perversely, saddened our hearts. They touched on our experience: *" We've talked about strangeness, alienation, separation, leaving behind., as opposed to membership, union, familiarity, belonging, bondage, gaining new insights."* The shifting perceptual moments of such a myriad of sensations Evelyn found, now occurred when a sense of estrangement was heightened. Such insights were no longer the stuff of everyday encounters, more occasional sensitive insights. These moments took place when something or somebody, prompted her to remember her life in the Philippines. A sensitized consciousness came into play, as she "stood" on the peripheries of both cultures. This fleeting, flickering side-by-side projection of two lifeworlds suggests a special significance in the creative Stranger's experience. Something profoundly disturbing occurred. Evelyn shook her head, her eyes lowered, as if in disappointment: *"I can get very emotional--that's where the disturbance, the anger* [is;] *sometimes frustration."* Each reminder of old alienations could for Evelyn, be a renewal of pain. She was aware of a risk. As a Stranger, wishing to avoid such incidents, she could withdraw, physically and psychically, from the cultural mainstream:

"You could not want to encounter anything new, because your memories of that initial bewilderment still exist."

A coming to terms with this pain has saved Evelyn unnecessary suffering. It heals earlier wounds, and lessens the savagery of later impacts. Had creativity aided this coming to terms? Evelyn believed so, but at a price. For her, art is an effective way of communicating her sense of being-in-the-world: *"The viewer sees and says yes, an artist! She looks different, the images are new or different but I know she has to work at visually making us. . . understand, mind, heart and soul."* The cost of this acceptance though, is the painful rejection of much of the imagery of her older creative lifeworld, in the knowledge that it would be spurned, ignored, or remain unrecognized by the all-important viewer. This worried Evelyn. Her creativity needed to be more than therapeutic, it had to be communicative: *"Is there such a thing as relocation for the artist? Does the viewer see the dislocated soul of this strange creative person? Would viewing the pain of dislocation* [in her Art], *the awkwardness of adjusting, help inculcate compassion for* [this] *human phenomena, or would it just make the viewer uncomfortable and therefore deny themselves that freedom to see, and ultimately to think?"*

As the years have passed, Evelyn the creative Stranger has grown used to what once was new. Perceptions change, what was before bizarre now dazzles less. Nevertheless, the see-saw from strange to familiar gains new complexity, and even discomfort: *"Sometimes I feel removed from others like me. They were like foreigners to me."* Evelyn indicated how much her sense of where

she belonged had changed. Her feelings of where, and with whom she felt most comfortable and at home was transforming. As a new selfhood made its presence felt, she sought out those who shared her sensibilities. Her voice lost its edge, the lines around her mouth softened. Evelyn knew a resting place: *"I tend to gravitate toward others that are like me in mind and energy. I do gain a certain type of belonging."*

Sub-theme number three: "An openness of attitude."

All of us, the creative Stranger included, need this sense of belonging. Evelyn voiced the need for a mutual openness of attitude, a willingness to look and listen without prejudging. This opening needed to be both communicative and therapeutic, to allow such belonging to occur. Respect is essential. As a Stranger, she knew the value of caution in her first introductions to a new group. She knew the threat that her mere presence as a Stranger could pose: *"I realized that by being there* [I] *could disturb someone else's total idea of existence by my presence. How much impact or self-introduction should I make of myself? It's the same way with my work, I'm very cautious not to overload, not to disturb someone else's sense of feeling."*

When the member receives the Stranger's tentative overtures, does his/her cultural values make such a spirited outpouring of self easy or palatable? Evelyn warned of the myopia of an undifferentiated, single world view: *"I'm not saying the locals don't have sensitivity, they're looking a different way."* However, what if the "local" isn't merely looking a different way? What if it is an

averting of eyes, a non-recognition? She had become aware of the restricted vistas of the ethnocentric eye whilst in the United States. A feeling of growing unease had provided an insight into a blinkered world view: *"I don't feel comfortable because there is that feeling that they are a superior culture.* [They have a] *Patronage* [of other Cultures]. *If they do take an interest it's not very sincere because there's no need,* [or] *understanding that your whole being can influence, enrich their lives. Due to their self-assurance,* [they] *won't take on new ideas from other cultures."* Evelyn sees no desire on the part of those members for a mutual opening, or sensitization. For them to become sensitized to what it is to be strange, there has to be that wish. Evelyn describes such a sharing as: *" An exchange amongst equals, going through all barriers."*

Sub-theme number four: "Struck dumb."

Evelyn described a film that she had seen, "Where the Green Ants Dream." This film dealt with the conflict between an Australian mining company and an Aboriginal group protecting sacred ground from excavation. From the almost farcical litany of misunderstandings, there emerged a unique character, that of the "Dumb Man". He is called this by fellow Aborigines because he is the sole-surviving member of a tribe whose language nobody else knows. He himself speaks no other languages. Therefore, to all intents and purposes, he is dumb. This pathetic figure of the "voiceless" man, for Evelyn and I spoke to the plight of those who had no access to self-expression. To paraphrase earlier words, art can express where words cannot. Is this a call to expression for the

Stranger? Evelyn introduced a new notion, that of the traumatized child. She compared this experience of profound shock with an immigrant's feeling of strangeness. Just as the "Dumb Man" could not voice his world, so the Stranger, as traumatized child in a new land. Evelyn as creative Stranger, felt a passionate need to be accepted as a creative person with a life story to tell. Nevertheless, she had at times "lost her voice": *"I have come to realize that all these years I have kept a rather enclosed and autistic perception of myself despite my exposure to a country that thrives on 'freedom of expression'. I was seduced by. . .the system. . .but I myself have not thought it is mine enough to be relaxed about the things I have to say in my work ."* To what extent I wondered, did Evelyn now feel that she had claimed enough belonging to have the confidence to freely express herself in her work?

Sub-theme number five: "Trade-offs."

The disturbances, ambivalent feelings, the strain of resolving (life)worlds, Evelyn had sought an expression of them. Ironically alienation, and a temporal and geographic distancing, seems to have given her creative Stranger's life story greater definition and focus: *"It becomes more real-that's why I went back to the Philippines, its to reinforce, verify that feeling., to find out that its not all fantasy."* Evelyn voiced her need to retain as much of her own historic sense of art and being as possible. Nonetheless, there is an awareness that some western ways of doing art have had to be "grafted" onto her artistic sensibility, in order that acceptance be more likely. This is a facet of her notion of *"Trade Offs"*. The more she tries to "hold on"

creatively, the greater the risk of possible member-rejection. The more she tries to graft on the symbolism of the new culture in her art, the greater the risk of losing a depth of self-expressiveness. Under these conditions, Evelyn sees that what she trades and what she keeps, is of crucial importance.

The perceptual journey, one of the paradoxes of creativity, drew our attention. Rueful smiles followed anecdotes of wasted hours in the studio. Grinning quizzically, Evelyn commented: *"As artists we did agree that we have to be detached in order to create. Funny how to be really good at being an artist you have to learn to be removed enough to get truly involved with the act of creating!"* Evelyn recounted an incident from her past which alludes to this seeming paradox: *"I had a drawing Instructor who always insisted 'Don't start drawing when you look at the object, stare and stare, study it, and then start working.' You have to know the subject, and know it well. . . to do that you have to be detached from it: that's a contradiction. To create you have to remove yourself from the actual. . ."*

Has Evelyn's estranged "vision" enabled her to comment through her art more incisively on a not yet taken-for-granted lifeworld (the member's home)? She hinted at the special vision of a culture that a creative Stranger could perhaps bring, asking: *"Does it take a Stranger to expose the obvious? Do immigrant artists give new vitality to ordinary, everyday reality?"*

As a creative Stranger the expression of Evelyn's search was her artwork. Was it really necessary though, that as she said you had to remove yourself from the midst of "it" to allow that detached

clarity which gave insight to her work? Her desire to find a new kind of creative self far away has been a guiding motivation for leaving home. The inevitable pain that accompanied such experiences brought for her a special depth of insight. Would a creative sensibility have hidden, inaccessible, if she had remained a "stay-at-home" member? Evelyn felt that especially for the artist, it was a necessity to take a chance with the alienation of creative distancing in order to spur on expression. The act of separation is a risk-taking. Evelyn asked: *"Is there a greater willingness to risk the unknown amongst migrant artists?"* The creative Stranger seeks an acceptance, but is it at any cost? Is the pain of separation a deterrent to creative risk? Alternatively, does it give birth to a feeling that one has nothing to lose?

Sub-theme number six: "Comforts."

Perhaps the most intimate of audiences is those closest to you, be they friends or loved ones. An entrant even into the most caring of such communities may face misunderstanding. How then, was Evelyn able to grow closer and more comfortable with those around her? How was it possible for her as a creative Stranger to make herself more open to loved ones?

Evelyn touched on the idea of comfort, being comfortable. The idea of home cozily enwrapped our talk. She nicely bonded the two notions together in a phrase: *" That comfortable Ahh. . ."* The means by which Evelyn feels an immigrant artist can settle down in a new land, and let out such a sigh of relief not only sheds light on the experience of the creative Stranger, but also how expression can be

an act of affirmation for all newcomers. When the creative Stranger "unpacks", s/he: *" Tries desperately to engage in the activity he or she is trained or familiar with doing. . . making art. That very gesture of painting, drawing, printing, sculpting, creating, is her own Home Act."*

As she herself began to feel a sense of nurturing community around her, so Evelyn felt greater confidence in producing her artwork, thus attaining a greater sense of belonging. She felt a desire to work: *"Comfortable is being able to work. Like this artist who had a nervous breakdown. He was able to work as he learned to accept himself and then be able to objectify his feelings. It gives relief. A good piece of work has the mind, the passion and the skill."* For Evelyn, the worth of art is inseparable from its deep meaning. Can the voice of the creative Stranger be heard amongst the more strident calls of a dominant social paradigm? Evelyn comments: *"Here I do feel there is a certain technically guided form. I work in a modest way, smaller and more personal. Being Filipino doesn't express itself in scale or technique, but in content. It is disturbing to have to rediscover a form that will convey my content."* Evelyn felt that the North American obsession with form and technique minimized content and meaning. She speculated that the very material richness of a society tended to distance it from spirit: *"Back home, with our technical restrictions, we are also capable of expressing ourselves. You could create out of the minimum., with restrictions. But you cannot necessarily create by being a technician. The technique over-rules the subject., and the object becomes meaningless."*

In Summary

Voices stilled briefly, we reflected. Summoning fresh sound to our lips, the talk wandered. We talked about poetry. I mentioned that one of my favorite poets was T.S. Eliot. I recalled the impact that "The Wasteland" had on me. Our conversation meandered once more, and Evelyn and I began to reflect on my Bridge[5] metaphor. She abruptly lapsed into silence, lost in thought. Moments later, her look gained a special animation. A lost memory was rediscovered. She had recalled a T.S. Eliot quote: "Life is a tension birth and death". From this, she had found an entirely new interpretation on what Bridge meant. Rather than looking at the Bridge merely as a spanning construction providing a different perspective, the structure of the Bridge itself began to take on significance. The shape of the bridge metaphor took on a tensile strength redolent of its physical qualities. What did this reconstructed Bridge mean to Evelyn, and my other partners, in their creative Lifeworld?

Evelyn, at the time of our conversations, was very aware of the discordances in her life. She described how she endlessly moved between strange and familiar, Filipino and Canadian, mother and artist. This described the sense of transience she had often felt. Her dispersed senses sought a reintegration, a healing. Part of this healing process was the Home Act, which allowed her to gain a sense of belonging and community. Another element in that healing was represented in metaphor by the Bridge. It became an image for her

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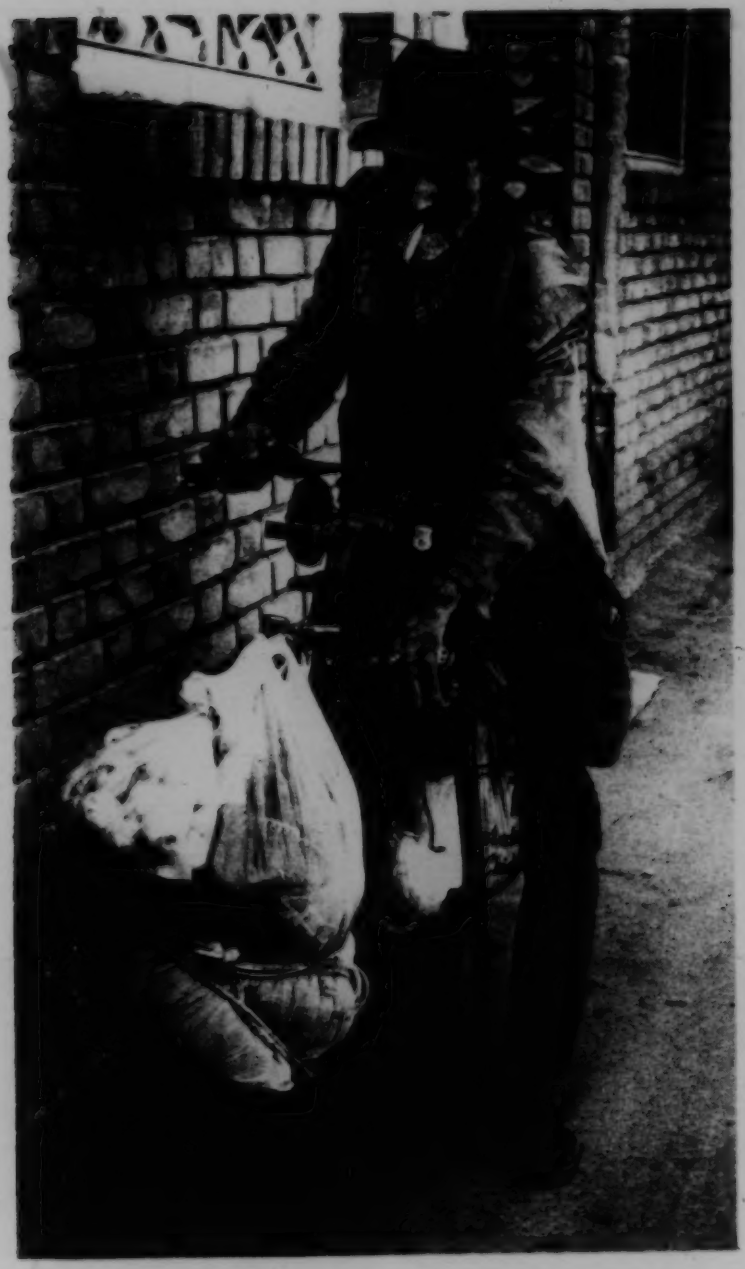
[5] See Appendix A, "The Bridge".

voyage to self healing, joining the disparate islands of her lived existence, and spanning the pain filled chasms of separation. It enabled a free flow of thought, feeling and expression between all the islands of her psychic archipelago. More though, it supplied a route toward a sense of belonging. For Evelyn a sharing of community with like minds, willing to share thoughts and experiences, represented a desired alternative to the Stranger's isolations. The comforts of a world view shared with others represented for Evelyn the preferred way to live and create. Would Mitsu and Sima define themselves similarly, or did they perceive their futures as Strangers in a different light?

CHAPTER FIVE

A Struggle for a creative voice to be heard. An escape from Numbness?



"The Knife Grinder." Black and white photograph.

Sima and I met first in Hub, to chat and drink coffee. We were both a little nervous so our talk was taut, forced. Occasionally though, we would alight on a shared idea. The work of a familiar artist, a place we had both visited. A small, slight figure in her mid-thirties, she wore lightly tinted glasses. They emphasized the aura of privacy which guarded her every gesture. She barely moved as we talked. From time to time though, a flurry of quick, almost tentative hand movements would emphasize a point. Sima spoke quickly, but in low, barely audible tones. I found myself leaning forward conspiratorially, as I tried to capture the fleeing words. Sitting slightly hunched over her coffee, sometimes she smiled or frowned reflectively, as thoughts gelled. We walked slowly still talking, over to a room in the Education building. In spite of the sterile linearity of the institutional surroundings, we began to relax in our conversation. Our talk meandered toward softer, less angular vistas.

Sub-theme number one: "Exile."

Sima had first left home as an art student, expecting to return a few years later. She went to Britain in a search of her "creative destiny", as it were. She explained the burgeoning ambition that had grown in Iran: *" In art, I felt isolated. It was totally personal, something inside, a need; to go, to be creative, it was a personal drive."* [1] Although her move from Iran had been prompted by a desire to broaden her horizons as an artist, she had nevertheless felt at home there: *" I was comfortable, I felt like a member. I felt*

[1] Sima's own words are henceforth italicized.

satisfied, safe; I didn't feel threatened by any outside forces". Sima fostered fond memories of her Mother-culture, where she was: *"Not scared of loosing anything".* Nevertheless, this sense of cosy belonging had been eroded by her growing sense of unease with the inconsistencies of the life going on around her. An awareness that all was not as it should be in an Iran ruled by the Shah made Sima see her own prosperous middle class upbringing in a new light. Introspectively, she sought refuge in her art. Frowning, she thoughtfully continued: *"I got temporary feelings of isolation once in a while. If I got 'that feeling', I did some painting ; then it would go, and I wasn't scared of loosing something".* Were the first seeds of strangeness sown for Sima before she ever left her homeland?

For the first time, in England Sima was exposed to a protracted sense of alienation. Nevertheless, as she reminisced about this episode in her life, her voice took on the animation of fond memories recalled: *"Going to England was strange, uncomfortable; but the unfamiliar got more 'familiar' and productive. I was doing something I wanted to do".* Did feeling strange help her as an artist? Did the practice of her art help in a gaining of familiarity? Nodding slightly, but with conviction, she explained: *"It was good in England because I was learning".*

She became immersed in her work, hardly aware of the menacing rumblings in Iran. Then the Shah was overthrown, and an expected eventual return became impossible. The pain and uncertainty of exile ensued, a cold heat which simmers still. With the angst of enforced dislocation came an effort to cut the ties of the heart, an emotional distancing: *"But now, I cannot go back, there's*

nothing there". Sima found solace and success in her artwork. Her creative voice had found an appreciative audience in England. Earlier wounds had been soothed, if not healed, and the future took on a rosier hue. The decision to come to Canada reflected a rising optimism. Coming here Sima felt confident, buoyed by her creative successes in England: *"When I came, I was full of energy, and expectations were one hundred percent positive and sure of self. You expect to come here and get the same things, the same feedback."*

Sub-theme number two: "Adaptions".

Sima's dreams were soon to be dissolved. Disappointments and frustrations were in store for her. She had expected an openness, an interest in herself and her work which was not forthcoming. The hurt of those disappointments suffused her now almost inaudible voice. She recalled: *"You end up with a negative response".* How did Sima perceive these rebuffs? The responses she received were both disconcerting and unexpected. Quite simply, people did not seem to understand what she was trying to say, personally or creatively. Her creative overtures were greeted with incomprehension, or dismissal. As she encountered this strange, blank wall of incomprehension, Sima felt ever more estranged, and alienated: *"You feel strange in the environment; the kinds of feedback you get are different, they make you feel strange. Feedbacks making you feel strange."*

Her inability to fully communicate had rendered Sima "voiceless". How was she to make others understand her, in all areas of her existence? The chill of isolation blanketed Sima's world: *"You*

isolate yourself because you come from a different background. Socially your education and your creativity is different. You can't meet with the societies expectations or standards of what they want". She found that even at the personal, social level, expectations and understandings differed greatly from those she was used to. This further compounded her sense of neither understanding, nor being understood. *"Gradually you isolate yourself because friends cannot meet your expectations, friendships here are very defined--totally different from my background."*

Sima did not wish to remain in a social limbo. The anger and hurt of exile from her homeland had forged a quiet will to succeed. In order to survive and prevail in a new land, Sima felt she had to develop a new public self, that she had to*"put on a face"* , presenting what she perceived as the required, expected persona in her dealings with others. This ploy met with some success. New-found social acceptability had its pitfalls however. Sima sensed a growing dislocation in her life. She had felt it first in England. She had been successful though, engrossed in her work. The first sighs of unease had been stilled. Now, the sighs were shouts: *"You become two persons, like an 'other-image'; so it takes you away from what you have."* Perversely, Sima saw that her gaining of social acceptability would be at the cost of her historic sense of self. The more she tried to fit in, the more she found that she had to: *"Change* [her] *style and creativity. You become a different person, you make adjustments; that's not you, it's what you've created to make a living and satisfy other people."*

Meanwhile, Sima felt a vital "self" lay unused and ignored, because it had no place in the new social world. The consequence for her was an unpleasant feeling of being two people, a fragmented, unwhole person. Sima parted the air in front of her with sharp, final gestures: *"The two persons are your real self or the other self that is trying to make a living or fit into society.* [Her palms shaped a rounded carapace] *They're the public, outside shell; how I behave in a situation, try to look right in certain situations, and do the right thing, and there's the inner person that carries all the other experiences that I had before."* A tension grew for Sima in the incongruities of her two existences. She felt her sense of being a full person was being undermined, and with it, her peace of mind:*" You can't always live in two different feelings, or carry two different feelings; you can't live in two 'places'. . . sometimes you want to think about your inner self, but sometimes it seems that you don't have time for that."* How would Sima resolve these two worlds within her? An existential pain resided here; was it pain like that of an illness, a bereavement, or even a birth?

Sub-theme number three: "Struggle."

Sima's first response to the hurt and confusion she was feeling was to become deadened, unresponsive to her lifeworld: *"You get numb."* Shrugging a little sadly, she described the sedative inaction which accompanied this deadening: *"Numbness, ache, discomfort; its like carelessness, its like when you take a tranquilizer and become numb; you have thoughts in your mind, but no action. You don't want to be tranquilized, but because of the situation , all the*

differences you're facing, you become numb, careless; you skate, you want to ignore it. Numbness builds up, facing others, problems, culture gaps; day to day life." Was this numbness like the work-calluses that stop your skin from feeling too sensitive? Was it a protection? Did numbness hinder or aid a psychic healing for her? The awareness of the risk of a depressive deadening, psychologically and creatively, prompted Sima to take action.

As we talked, a pervasive theme grew, which described her decision to take action. This was Sima's idea of "struggle." In this context, it referred to several entwined, but nevertheless identifiable areas of life; a striving in the economic, career field, and holding on, to maintain a sense of psychic unity. Both were inseparable from her desire to continue to speak her world creatively: *" I had to struggle, so I didn't give up; to live here and survive, I had to struggle. I'd waited so long to reach this point that I could express myself in some kind of an artwork; so that was the time I didn't want to give up".* Sima's struggle was with in war of attrition that everyday life waged on her Stranger's sense of personal history. In the struggle to hold onto her own history as a creative Stranger, Sima valued her own creativity and struggled to convince others of the meaning and worth of her expression. For her a sense of self esteem and being creatively active was an intrinsic part of her biography. To be creative was perceived as a need: *"If I'm not creating I'm like a vegetable. My brain, my body, works like a robot if I can't use it properly. Sometimes I feel like a vegetable when I can't be creative, can't be what I want."*

Sima did not want to loose the stuff of her creative history. Was it possible to hold onto her creative biography though? *"You loose the part that was struggling, those things which you were holding so tight, as you get swept away in routine work. Making a living, you can't struggle to hold on and make a living, so you have to push them away. Being forced through different channels, not being able to do what you wanted, being absorbed, getting distracted from creativity".* The daily rush to make money and survive, was tearing away Sima's sense of personal continuity. The everyday abrasions of life and work were shaping and directing her. She felt her control over her past even, was being wrested away: *"Struggling is where, it 'wears' you all the time! You struggle because you want to survive, and you don't want to loose yourself. Some people are more sensitive, or emotional to what they have."*

Sima's decision to take action, to clear the numbness and struggle to hold on to her entire history, speaks of a desire[2] to return to a sense of wholeness.[3] The need grows to become whole again;

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[2] Wright, Elizabeth. Structural psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic criticism. Methuen 1984. Lacan terms this the "desire of the mother."

> A double genitive referring to both the mother's desire and the desire for the mother. . . Both of these aspects. . . combine to keep the child's ego concept in a profoundly illusory state. . . The gap appears with the initiation of the child into the order of language, what Lacan calls the "Symbolic order". . . Society's injunction that desire must wait, that it must formulate in the constricting word whatever demand it may speak, is what effects the split between conscious and unconscious, the repression that is the tax exacted by the use of language. p.108-9.

[3] Wright, Elizabeth. Structural psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic criticism. Methuen 1984. Lacan sees a regaining of "wholeness" as an impossible fantasy, a return to a pre-linguistic self:

> The Child looks in the mirror and is delighted by several qualities of its own image simultaneously. Whereas before it experienced itself as a shapeless mass, it now gains a sense of wholeness, an ideal completeness, and this all without effort. This gratifying experience of a mirror image is a metaphorical parallel of an unbroken union

but was that possible, was she ever whole? *"Wholeness? We are not whole; like a person flying across on a plane, we seem whole, but we've left something. We're all fractured. Split."*

Sub-theme number four: "Responsibilities."

Is it possible for the Stranger to seamlessly fit into the new society? Are some Strangers capable of doing this effortlessly, or is the split, with all the pain it connotes, inevitable? Sima's ambivalence to those who have seemed to equably settle in was mediated by her concession that such a route held its advantages: *"It depends on your personality; how strong you feel about yourself, or your ties in your own culture. I've seen artists who've adapted themselves in their society, and they've now become part of this society, very successful too. You can't see that these people come from a different country. If you're completely integrated, there's no need to struggle, or create."* For Sima, the uncritical acceptance of new ways might mean success and comfort. However, it also meant for her the end of struggle, a cutting of ties, and the end of the special creative impetus of the Stranger. She felt that those whose want to be accepted overrided all else, were deepening the rift between their lifeworlds. A placid face could be presented to the world, but the existential crevasse would remain, concealed yet unhealed: *"If she compromises a lot, forgets about her own expectations, and accepts all the social expectations she's destroying yourself ; to become one image instead of two images. You're*

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between inner and outer, a perfect control that assures immediate satisfaction of desire. p 108.

absorbed. . . to lose. . ." Sima could not countenance this absorption, this loss of expectations in her own life. Rather than acquiescing, enduring the rending of two lifeworlds, she preferred to struggle on in the hope of bringing her entire biography into play in the present. To put her past behind her was unacceptable. The cost to her sense of creative history would be too great. For Sima to continue her story, it was necessary that she struggle to hold on, in the hope that her own tensions and fears would be resolved. Voice rising with a conviction born of her own experience, she continued: *"You can't break a hundred percent with the past; that's when you really become two persons."*

For Sima, creativity was always an inseparable facet of her continuing story. On arrival in Canada, she was rendered "mute" by the member's incomprehension of her creative voice. She became "numbed", forming a protective layer as she encountered different artistic standards and expectations. For Sima at least, this was an inevitable response to disappointment and insensitivity: *"If you make your living by art, it's planned, it's protection."* She found she had to imagine and create differently. She found she no longer had an easily reached source of expression in the world around her. A new way to express her self had to be found: *"Sometimes its hard because you don't get touched in your feelings and your emotions, and you can't unconsciously create something. Here, if you want to create something, it seems that you have to be really conscious. You want to create something of your inner self, but at the same time, you're not in the right environment. You're strange in your environment, you have no feelings, or less feelings."*

This sense of strangeness left Sima in a quandary. How could she both express her own voice, but also touch those whose world she was now in, her new "audience"? For Sima, an expressive mode had to be found which combined her own historic narrative with a contemporary social conscience. This was what she called responsible art. She did not wish to produce a purely idiosyncratic work, inaccessible to her new viewers. To do that would merely perpetuate her creative isolation. Was creative compromise necessary? She described how her notions of what art meant had changed, since her days in Iran: *"Its not as real because you can't fulfil all your desires. If you want to be creative just for yourself, ignoring other people and the society that you're living in, you become very isolated, because you can't always present yourself the way you want to be, so you have to make some changes, do some compromises."* Sima, in her struggle, appreciated that she had to make sacrifices in order to have a voice in the new cultural milieu.

Sub-theme number five: " New focus."

Could her art help Canadians understand more the experience of the immigrant/stranger? We talked about this idea. She described her art as addressing social and cultural problems, an: *" Informative art, sharing some experience with other people; maybe they're sharing the same thing. I care a lot about those people."* She desired through her work, to make people feelingly aware of the struggles of others. A sharing of perspective. As an artist, she felt she had to open up to tell her story; but how could she get the viewer to do the same thing? How could she touch people's

awareness, giving them a fresh insight on the world? Sima used her own origins as the wellspring of her ideas. Using a favoured contemporary medium, photography, she dealt with issues which examined her changing lifeworld in three lands. Seriously, but enlivened with enthusiasm, Sima explained: *"To convince people--the public, to look at your work in a different way, you look back to your old culture without knowing, unconsciously; you try to let them know that there are other worlds too, you show them that they can see other things than what they've seen so far."* Sima attempted to subtly alter the viewers expectations, creating new views on the plight of the other. Could such work touch those members who were swept up in workaday preoccupations?

Sima had a small, but significant goal for her work: *"Can it make the people who don't care, care a little bit more? Yes, it can. I think you should try, because how many times can people turn their head, or eyes? They can't do it all the time. Even once, if they turn their head, they start thinking about it; that's enough, I think. A heightened awareness."* This was the communicative desire implicit in her work. However, Sima also had some profound personal reasons for continuing her work. Her artwork provided an escape from the mute isolation of numbness. Sima saw the withdrawal and depression of numbness as a trance, within which traces of lucid insight would occasionally glow: *"If you're numb, you can still see; you have a dream that you're still running. You see yourself running, but you're not running, you're stopping somewhere. That's the strange reality in your imagination".*

These traces offered vistas of another reality. Was creative struggle one way to rise from the numb trance? *"Does your creativity stop you from feeling numb? If you touch your emotions in some way, like a spark in a dark room, its like that, like a crack that the light shines through and hits the sensitive bit; you start feeling things."* Sima's art provided for her a voice, and an escape from numbness. The fruits of such struggle were a new found confidence to speak out, and take action: *"Can you reach, can you send your message to people? That you care? Yes, sending a message, you announce yourself; you want to say that you are here, that you are not a stranger, though you're from somewhere else."* Sima had believed strongly that the story she had to tell would touch on other peoples lives; in telling her story through her art, she had announced herself, achieving a kind of belonging.

However, this belonging feels partial and temporary to Sima. Rather than feeling totally assimilated, and at ease in all situations, she has come to appreciate where she can, and cannot feel comfortable. Her eyes focussed on some far off point. She smiled resignedly: *"Its just everyday like a scene off a movie for me. I see things there. I see myself in some parts that I fit, and some parts that I don't. The Strangeness thing; you learn where to fit in, you always have to think before you approach, but its good. Hurting is part of the scenario, I think. I think a person gets hurt a lot; has she any protection for that?"*

Sub-theme number six: " Presentations."

Living with strangeness has taught Sima to be cautious, wary and expectant of hurt. She feels her membership to be a tenuous one. There is still the sense that she has to provide a public face. She views some of her social interactions from a distance, like a film viewer. In this respect at least, she is still isolated, the Stranger.

As a creative Stranger, Sima felt the issue of gender further colored her social interactions: *"You were talking about having a voice. This society is still a very male dominated society, and sometimes I feel in this job that I do, that I can't send my voice too loud because I'm a woman; sometimes I feel sealed in here."* She felt that her voice was stifled by society's expectations of her. Indeed, she concluded that her voice was regarded as carrying less authority than her male colleagues: *"If I presented some work and you presented some work, there is something in the way they look at your work unconsciously as maybe more important than mine because you're a man, because its a long history. It's still in their mind that if it's a man its important."* This was part and parcel of the struggle to hold on to her sense of history: *"As a woman you have to prove yourself, that you are equal, that's part of the struggle too."*

Sima had decided to make a film about what it meant to be a woman, and a Stranger. The film was about her parents, and the way their lives had changed since fleeing Iran. She presented her mother as being very isolated, still living the dream of her past. Effectively she had no "voice". She was unable to express herself in English, and her contacts with other Iranians save her husband, were

non existent: *"In her life, she's not able to understand the reality of what's happened to her. She still thinks she might one day go back to that life"* [In Iran]. Sima felt that she could give her Mother a chance to voice her world through the film: *"Not just this part, the whole thing. I think I see it's very painful."*

In the assembling of this film, she was also addressing her own past, presenting in a readily communicable way, what it meant to be a Stranger in a strange land. Could such enactments of a responsible art, describing the world of the Stranger, yield new meanings to us all? Sima sees such works as this as her announcement of settlement. In her art she shows a commitment to span the painful gaps in her own, and others lifeworlds. She has adapted herself to a particular situation, but the reminders of estrangement are ever present. She gave a brief, businesslike shrug: *" OK, I fit here, and you start adapting yourself. It means it's not something that's done naturally. You're adapting yourself to something which is strange for you, or which is different from your own circle, or environment; people around me, everything. You become quite aware of things, that you don't fit in. But again, after a day of working, and struggling, you don't want to think about those realities sometimes, but you always know that they are there."*

The realities of struggle are a daily fact for Sima. Her desire to be creatively recognized, but true to her own past, has given her art a certain perspective. She hopes that her art will provide a window for Canadians to perceive a different world-view. A little bitterly, she voiced her dissatisfaction with aspects of Canadian culture: *" Fast life, fast thinking, fast eating; they need to be educated more about*

many things. Life isn't just 7/11 and burgers. People don't create and take part in the culture, it's like having no vote".

In Summary.

Of any of the people I spoke with, Sima seemed to feel the strains of being a Stranger most. The contradictions of her existence loomed large in our talk. The violent intensity of these tensions seemed to be reflected in the forceful metaphors she used to describe her life as Stranger. Central to her whole conception of experience was her notion of struggle. She struggled to hold on, trying not to lose "things". Numbness had to be fought off, and fleeting creative insight had to be captured. She struggled for recognition. To gain recognition personally and creatively, was a struggle. She evoked storm-tossed images of her life. Desperately almost, she was clawing her way up the beach, saving what she could. Why was Sima's expression of her world so tempestuous? What did it say about her life as a Creative Stranger?

Undoubtedly her enforced exile and later disillusionments, had created pain and bitterness. This had given Sima an earnest desire to be heard. Her creative shout was a command for the member to listen. What she described emerged from her experience as a Stranger coming from outside. Her "two people" scenario, although philosophically debatable, formed a viable metaphor for the schisms of her life. In her work, Sima describes a shared humanity, be it in Iran, England, or Canada. Was this responsible art a sharing, an art of emancipation?

Sima had been rendered "speechless". However, she has found a new voice. What has been the cost? She has had to learn not only how to hold on, but also how to move on. What had been lost and gained in the struggle? What is the special voice of her creativity, and how is it useful pedagogically?

Sima valued the insights that her life as a Stranger had provided. She did not wish to become member-comfortable. That would mean a loss of her creative "eye", and a denial of her past. Rather, she preferred to maintain a guarded isolation in her social interactions. For Sima, strangeness, pain filled or not, was immovably buried deep in her sense of being. Creatively at least, she saw it as a positive human condition, not merely a phenomenon associated with loneliness and persecution. Was Sima's acceptance of strangeness an eccentric, idiosyncratic act, or could her experience speak to us all?

Our words had petered out. Both Sima and I had found our talk, touching on some profound feelings, tiring. We both sat back, relaxed in our chairs. Sima lit a cigarette, and I poured out two cups of coffee.

CHAPTER SIX

A Sedimentation of the soul: stratas of experience.
Refreshing new vistas.

"Clear in the Blue." Mixed media on Canvas.

Mitsu and I met at lunchtimes, in the school art room where he was at that time, artist in residence. Deceptively far off sounding yells and slammings would echo around the recently vacated room. Each day we gingerly picked our way around the celebratory clutter of children's sculptures. Everyday materials, the detritus of a modern child's existence, had metamorphosed into animals, machines, buildings. Toilet rolls had become space ships, bottle tops the portholes on their sides. Mitsu and I perched, oddly oversized anachronisms amidst this creative maelstrom. The freshness and vigor of young art drew our attention, and praise. More than once, I considered in cynical detail the lengths to which many artists went trying to regain these lost moments of spontaneity.

Mitsu is a tall-ish, slim figure. His goatee beard gave him the appearance of the scholar, an oriental Van Dyke surrounded by the work of his mischievous apprentices. He spoke quietly but with precision, in English lightly accented with Japanese cadences. He grew up in the countryside between Osaka and Tokyo, in a household with a strong commitment to Zen Buddhism. Unusually in such an otherwise traditional household, Mitsu's mother exposed him to western arts, especially music. Consequently, Mitsu felt that his own inheritance owed something to occidental influences. He had always felt a little alienated from the mainstream in Japan. Perhaps he suggested, his sense of difference was attributable to those early sensitizations. I wondered, were the variety of voices that he heard in his childhood in part responsible for his wish to leave?

He described his model of Japanese society: *"There, in Society . . . human relations are rigid, hierarchical. Codes of language even,*

socially place you." Perhaps because of his childhood awakening to an alternative world view, Mitsu found it hard to unquestioningly accept the Status Quo: *" I noticed the discrepancies, so it was hard to integrate".* He admires the old ways, but the inconsistencies between modern and traditional in contemporary Japan disturbed him. Consequently an: *"Extra effort was needed to synchronize."*

Mitsu had felt a need to synchronize into what he described as the homogeneity of Japanese society. He cited the case of a world famous Japanese composer of western classical music. He had been vitriolically attacked in the media, because he consistently flouted the rules of etiquette required of a "personality". Mitsu quoted an English version of a Japanese saying, which the composer had used to explain the ethos which prompted the media attack: *" If you're different, you get hit like a nail sticking out of a piece of wood, back in".* Quite simply, Mitsu had expressed what was for him the near-impossibility of maintaining a different, outspoken stance in Japan. He had felt compelled there to suppress his "real self". The taken for granted, Japanese reality was not permitting him to gain new insights into the contradictions of his world-as-lived: *"Like a fish in the water, I didn't notice I was in the water. When I came here, things came to the surface.* [In Japan] *harmony is very important. . . things never comes to the surface."* Did Mitsu see this sense of social harmony, maintaining a calm surface, as somehow running counter to his sense of free individual expression?

Mitsu's will to express himself in part prompted his decision to leave. Smiling, he wryly commented: *"I had left Japan before I left Japan".* Nevertheless, he saw that his words and his art evoked a

deep nostalgia for "home". He had not disowned his Japaneseness, rather he selected what he needed of it for another reality. Memory had drawn from many sources: *"Self* [came] *from upbringing, Japanese culture, a feeling of Japaneseness. The things I have seen or been, are not all Japanese. These things . . . sometimes cause conflict, imbalance"*. Harmony, conflict, would these become lasting themes in our talk?

Sub-theme number one: "Translations."

Mitsu has taken the selectivity of memory knowingly into account. For his purposes, he is content with the notion that: *"Japanese culture is myself"*. His earlier Life had: *"Installed a gyroscope which keeps running, it's still there."* However, much of his life has been in the West. A whole complex of memories have grown in a very different lifeworld: *"Feelings become memories; I've spent twenty years away from Japan."* Mitsu laughed. His arm swept round, jabbing occasionally at points in its arc: *"I've lived there, and there, and there. I've accumulated other fresh memories; They're mixed up together. . .and they come to the surface in my work"*. Surface again; was this alluding to his life as much as his paintings?

So Mitsu and his Wife came to Canada. Inevitably, new problems arose. Frustrations with a foreign language came to the fore. Strangely, Mitsu found these struggles with English liberating. He felt that he had loosened the straitjacket of Japanese culture, gaining a fresh eye on the world. Canada seemed spacious and open, physically and attitudinally. Nevertheless, a limited facility in

English made Mitsu keenly aware of his own limited access to self expression. He had been given few chances to express himself in his mother-tongue:" *Was I ever able to express myself comfortably in my native tongue?"* He wondered. Would art, and painting in particular, provide him with the opportunity to express more of self?

He found that in this new place, visual expression opened up unexpected vistas. Art became his voice, a medium of communication where he felt comfortable and fulfilled. Canada seemed to welcome his creative autobiography. In Japan, he had never thought that he could express himself through art. Had there been a fear that he would be misinterpreted, and become an offending "nail", waiting to be punched back into the social timber?

Newly arrived in Canada, Mitsu felt *"refreshed"*. His encounters with another language and culture had given a new self-meaning. With freshness, feeling *"reborn"*, he took up the paintbrush to paint his changing experience. There was a comfort in the brush and the marks it made; they described a new life-luster. I wondered, was this a spiritual, psychic awakening for him? For his first one man Show, Mitsu painted prairie landscapes. In these typically North American images, he was addressing a synthesis of experience. As a child, he had cultivated an interest in Haiku poetry. Haiku is a traditional poetic form which operates within a strict 5-7-5 syllable meter. Consequently, the poems meaning must be expressed with profound brevity. Basho, a contemporary of Shakespeare's, was the foremost exponent of this art. As Mitsu read Basho, he became aware of how Basho's poetic persona changed in translation. In Japanese, his words made him appear old. In English, his words gave

him the aura of the roving vagabond, or the western hero: *"The first winter rain, and I shall be called, Traveller."*

Intrigued with this "refreshing" discovery, this new insight, Mitsu came to realize how the translation of Basho's words and their change in meaning through this process, presented in allegory his own unfolding creative biography. In this awareness of the relationship between Basho's text and his own images, he felt that he was in a special way translating his experience in his painting; for himself in reflection, and for the viewer of his paintings. Was this what each creative Stranger did, translate their experience? His work took a psychic toll: "[I] *use all senses possible,* [it's] *draining emotionally, difficult to find balance, especially as I work in an instinctive, intuitive way. What I have is a vague 'feeding' atmosphere. I find a clue, as if it's a stain on the wall, and somehow it started it's own formation. So, I try and capture and nourish the images."* Feeding, nourishment, refreshment. What did these words say to Mitsu's experience as creative Stranger?

Sub-theme number two: " Different angles."

Zen has deeply influenced Mitsu's view of Art, and language. He feels that it provides for him that wellspring of contemplation, intuition and spontaneity that is so necessary to his visual creativity. His interest in the Zen of painting, epitomized in the expression of one brush stroke, informed his conviction that words limited expression more than they fulfilled. Having been schooled in the European style of Architectural formalism, he saw the western approach to knowledge and research as a useful conceptual tool.

Nevertheless, he also felt that its analytic, reductionist tendencies, allied to a profligate verbosity, made it insensitive to its subject. For insight and reflection, he returned to the flow of Zen.

Mitsu feels he has been influenced by a variety of traditions. As child and adult, he not only learnt of Buddha and Haiku. Through his mother, and then his life in the west, he learnt of Christian thought, and the music of Mozart. He senses that this puts him in a special position, where he is able to look at western culture with a different perspective. He says: *"This has enhanced my creativity. I have some 'shared' views. I share the same mode of expression, but I look at expression and views from different angles".* Art, for Mitsu has the potential to be a universal "language" when a shared constellation of such views guarantee at least some understanding for all viewers. Could this be a special view that the Stranger artist could provide?

Sub-theme number three: " Seeing differences."

Mitsu rarely converses in his mother tongue now. His way of thinking and creating he believes has been transformed by the adoption of another language: *"In your mother tongue, much is taken for granted. You never express the meaning of an idea, what you mean by a word. When you go to a foreign land and culture, you learn about it, but also about your own culture, finding your own. In order to identify the color black, you need white, in order to realize the light, you should have shadow. It's an analogy for when you face another culture."* Was this juxtaposing a simultaneous bringing to consciousness of two lifeworlds?

What of coping with this new culture? Once again, Mitsu reached for his conceptual palette: *"You learn to cope with your surroundings. Experience helps you make this activity 'grey'. When you encounter something different, you may 'break down', so through experience we learn how to cope, so it becomes an everyday object."* The everydayness of coping seemed to describe the unquestioned world of the Member. Was he as a creative Stranger, aspiring toward such membership? Frowning, he shook his head. He explained: *"Visual artists have to respond to the environment in a fresh manner each time. We have to refresh our memories; each time we see our environment we have to respond as if we are seeing things for the first time. This sometimes causes conflict, imbalance."* Mitsu did not seem to be speaking of conflict and imbalance in a negative sense. He continued: *"I don't condition myself. After years of struggle, all of a sudden I have found a way to express myself, so I don't interact with other people."* For Mitsu it seemed, a certain disharmony and alienation was inseparable from his sense of free expression.

Using the translation of Haiku as a model, Mitsu described how the complex interplays of light and dark "life hues" informed his life as a creative Stranger: *" Haiku, when translated* [has] *inevitable distortions. Old stuff in new clothes.* [With] *the things that you encounter as an immigrant,* [there are] *layers and layers of incidence".* The many-hued sedimentation of memory, constantly transforming in the light and dark of changed experience, was a theme which repeatedly surfaced in our talk. Using this metaphor, Mitsu described how his life and his paintings gelled: *"What I'm*

doing is not to try and impose strict meaning, I'm trying to expose myself, my coming to Canada. . . .the sedimentations and strata, that's what I'm trying to express. People and things. . . I interpret". The traces, the strata of his life history are the stuff of his paintings: *"When you see my work you see the remnants in my being of my mother tongue, my being in Japan. Somehow it has become a sedimentation of my soul. Sometimes it comes to the surface. You may call it memory--bits of ideas, feelings, seeing bits of meaning and atmosphere, they accumulate."* Sedimentations, distortions, surfaces. Could Mitsu's art be such a faithful metaphor for his life? He sees his work as a mirror to other people's experience: *"My work is a reflection, a mirror. Most people say they're religious, like icons".*

Sub-theme number four: "The air you breathe".

We began to talk about the meeting of minds and bodies which cultural mixing encourages. Using a confluence of ocean currents as an metaphor, Mitsu explained how he believed such blending had enriched his experience: *" Conflict of cultures, 'interference'--where different cultures contact, it's like the ocean, where different currents meet. It's the richest place where you can fish. Flows and mixes. Yes, this intentionally and unintentionally comes to the surface in my painting".* Mitsu lapsed into silence. The slight, ever present grin that teased the corners of his mouth faded. Slowly, thoughtfully, he continued: *" If I were in Japan now, I would still have felt trapped. You can't escape feeling a kind of homogeneity. When I left, there was a pollution hysteria. Daily food quotas in the newspapers. The trouble with living in a homogeneous society is*

that there is no 'insulation' between. Information goes through like [his head jerked round, through ninety degrees]--*that!"* Mitsu described how Canada provided an alternative: *"I didn't want to get stuck, I needed some air to breathe".* His smile returned: *"In Canada there's plenty of 'air'. I needed isolation, air to breathe".* Isolation and air. Insulation. Homogeneity. Interference. What was he expressing about his Lifeworld?

In Summary.

A sense of acceptance, of feeling "comfortable", had come to Mitsu through the practice of his art:*" All those years when I worked as an architect, I never felt a member. Now I feel I'm accepted because I and my work am recognized ; I'm doing my own--".* What kind of acceptance and comfort had Mitsu found? Could his experience speak of other Stranger's lifeworlds? When he came to Canada, Mitsu found he was unable to feelingly speak his world. He found an outlet for his expression in the form of painting. Painting is the act of applying layers of pigment onto a flat surface. The metaphors that Mitsu uses to describe his lifeworld cluster around the sensual imagery of this activity. He speaks of how his paintings are the sedimentation of his soul, how the dis-harmonies of his life come to the surface of his art. The sediment, the strata of his memories are layered on the canvas as if it were his psyche made physical. He talks about the flows and mixes of his experience, just as he would speak about the mixing and application of paint. He paints landscapes. The subtly contoured interplays of form, of light and dark, are evoked in his references to the atmospheres, the

interferences, the blacks, whites and greys of his memory. He speaks of his work as an entity that needs to be fed and nourished. The prairies where he lives, in which he paints, are a place where he is refreshed, where he can breathe. Mitsu sees his painting as an expression of his lifeworld. That is not to say that if we interpret Mitsu's work, we read his life. Rather, we should see his painting as inherently creative. His paintings are not a narrative of his life as a creative Stranger. They are, in all their rich sediments of meaning, a metaphor for that existence. What can we unearth from these layers that will tell us more about the life of the creative Stranger?

CHAPTER SEVEN

All was not as it seemed

Introduction to the composite Stranger

Mitsu, Evelyn and Sima have all led very different lives. Their varied experiences as members, strangers and artists reflect those differences. Nevertheless there have been confluences in the flow of their lives. The leaving of their homelands, their coming to Canada, and their pursuance of a creative life mark three such meetings. The fourth, most recent of these confluences has been their talk with me about their world as lived.

In my meetings, I brought my own experiences as creative Stranger to our conversations. We were all led to the question by our biographies. Our shared talk and fresh understandings were brought to a completion in the hermeneutic spirit, as an inherently artistic process. The following interpretations will follow the same inherently expressive course. I shall combine elements of Evelyn's, Mitsu's and Sima's lives to arrive at a composite story of a life as a creative Stranger. This novel[1] arrangement of the parts of their lives will help yield new understandings on the experience of strangeness, and the meaning of creativity in that context: "In the oscillating movement between whole and part--it is always in this movement that we learn to understand an alien meaning, a foreign language or a strange past. The circular movement is necessary because 'nothing that needs interpretation can be understood at once'."[2]

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[1] Two meanings of this word, "new", and "story", both have relevance here.
[2] Gadamer, H. Truth and Method. Crossroad, NY. 1986. p.168-9.

The Stranger's life can be characterized by this oscillation between part and whole, strange and familiar. Elements of Evelyn's, Mitsu's and Sima's lives can combine briefly to make the fragmentations of experience whole. In that fleeting moment of joining we can understand more deeply what the life journey of the Stranger is like. In the diversity of their Stranger's stories, we can appreciate how the very particularity of their lives leads to a shared meaning.

Every theme which emerged from this weaving together of diverse experiences owes something to all four of us who partook of the sharing of the conversation. Nevertheless, one voice would often surface above the others in an interpretation. Consequently, I shall preface the particular thematic chapter with a quote from that person, hopefully adding focus to the images generated.

A note on the "voices" of the Stranger composite.

In order for the reader to easily differentiate between each of the constituent voices that combine to make the Stranger, I shall use a different typographic style for each person, when I quote them.[3] I adopted this device so as to minimize breaks of continuity in the text.

3Typographies denoting the words of each person are as follows:
Evelyn=Chicago. *Italic=Mitsu* . **Venice=Sima.**

All was not as it seemed.

Mitsu: *"I noticed the discrepancies, so it was hard to integrate."*

Introduction

The Stranger comes from somewhere else. The common understanding is that somewhere is a native land where she[4] belongs, where she is a member. Was she ever such a member in this home land? Were the habitual rules so unconsciously and unreservedly followed? Alternatively, was the distanced sensibility of the Stranger a constituent part of her sense of self from the earliest days?

The seeds of discontent.

For the Stranger, there were early introductions to the arts of the west. Music and painting fostered a childhood awareness of a life beyond native shores. She described how her early sensitizations to other ways of being gave her opportunities to critically regard her own culture. In so doing, it was sometimes harder to accept the required modus operandi, and fit in: *"I noticed the discrepancies, so it was hard to integrate. Extra effort was needed to synchronize."* Her parents came from different races and cultures. Consequently she occasionally felt isolated by her mixed background from the social mainstream. She recalls how it: **"caused friction; you're reminded where you belong."** She at times felt like a fringe person,

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[4] Re: The use of gendered language. I shall use "she" whilst talking of my composite Stranger figure. This is because two of my three partners in discourse were women, and hence their contribution to this composite character would be likely greater.

a Stranger, in the land of her birth: **"I was awkward. I wanted an identity; I never really fitted in."** Feeling alienated from the mainstream, she began tentatively to question the world view which unquestioningly accepted the status quo. At first clumsily, but with ever growing confidence she looked for an alternative view on her world. Early alienations were forcing her to look at her world in a different light. Nevertheless, much of her world was unquestioned, and wholeheartedly accepted; her involvement in the routine of daily life was a guarantee of that.

The cultural trance.

"Like a fish in the water, I didn't notice I was in the water". So the Stranger explained to me her immersion in the lifeworld of her native land. In her speech and behavior, she adopted the tried and trusted habitualities of daily life. Few if any, radically new ideas emerged: *"In your mother tongue much is taken-for-granted. You never express the meaning of an idea, what you mean by a word".* There was yet little sense of oppression, or feeling thwarted. The unquestionedness of lived reality had a comfort about it, a feeling of belonging: **"I was comfortable, I felt like a member. I felt satisfied, safe. I didn't feel threatened by any outside forces. I wasn't scared of losing anything."**

Nevertheless, such comforting membership was at times tinged with a vague sense of unease, as yet unfocussed. Personal creativity provided a welcome release from such strange anxieties. It played a calming, therapeutic part in her life: **"If I got 'that feeling', which was temporary, I did some painting ; then it would go, and I**

wasn't scared of losing something. I didn't expect to sell those works, it was something totally personal."

Membership.

The Stranger's homeland is an old culture. In spite of western trappings, it is still an overwhelmingly traditional society. Every type of behavior, every nuance of manner or dress, means something: *"There, in society--human relations are rigid, hierarchical. Codes of language even, socially place you."* With such prescribed relationships, there is in one's attitude to others still a fear of hurting, or offending. To the Stranger's mind this makes it hard to be outspoken or express a different view from that of the norm. To not conform is to risk censure. Harmony and balance are important. Any potential destabilizers are dealt with summarily: *"It's a homogeneous society, so if you're different you get 'hit' like a nail sticking out of a piece of wood, back 'in' ."* With such a desire for harmony, to question or challenge accepted practices is deemed to be profoundly anti-social. Consequently: *"Things never come to the surface"*. For most, the taken-for-granted world is accepted without criticism. To snugly fit in is the overriding desire. There is a: *"need to belong"*.

Speaking out subverts the desired harmony of ones own and also ones loved ones lifeworlds. If you do not unquestioningly accept, there is*"discordance"*. Such assonances were later to ring out in the world of the Stranger. She was to gain an ear for these strange sounds. This discriminating sensibility was to gain a critical focus which would ultimately distance her from her native lifeworld.

Sensitizing.

At first, a feeling that all was not as it seemed was: "Just a temporary sense of isolation once in a while, which I could satisfy by painting, drawing or playing music. After, I felt good." A feeling of not belonging was temporarily soothed. Nevertheless, a nagging something remained: "It wasn't a big feeling of isolation because I was satisfied with my social life and my friends, everything, except that--". Her creative and social activities, although eminently satisfying, also served to sharpen the critical eye turned on her own lifeworld. As she noticed more and more "*discrepancies*", so she found it increasingly difficult to integrate.

An awareness grows.

The growing awareness of inequalities and inconsistencies in her culture made the effort needed to "*synchronize*" to socially expected norms of thinking and behavior ever greater. She told me about her cousin: "When he was a child he used to play with a poor part of his family. His father took him aside, and told him not to mix with them or 'you'd never improve yourself'. This story disturbed me; it meant you'd pick up certain behaviors and patterning that would hold you back by mingling with poor rather than richer relations." She was becoming sensitized to the pressures that were forcing herself, and others, to synchronize to the social dance. Would she accept these coercions as most others did, or would her estranged eye lead her elsewhere? "I was already dissatisfied with what was existing in the country. There was a total conditioning, it had nothing to do with the core of the

human being, nothing to do with people. I still thought there was a fine 'nativeness', but I couldn't get at it because graft, corruption, poverty was there."

Bonds are loosened.

Were the seeds of a personal rebellion against an oppressive social hierarchy germinating? A sense of cosy belonging had been eroded by her growing sense of unease with the inconsistencies of the life going on around her. An awareness that all was not as it should be made her see her own prosperous middle class upbringing in a new light. The Stranger, distanced from her own lifeworld, began to look inquiringly overseas.

A reason to go.

Disenchantment led to alienation, and with it a decision to pursue a personal vision abroad: *"I had left* [my homeland] *before I left !"* What was once a vague desire to leave had now become a focussed need. Leaving would not be without its pains however. In order to leave, the reason for leaving would have to be worth the angst of departure. That reason was supplied by a vision honed by a sensitization to a no longer taken for granted home. The Stranger had two goals. To pursue an ideal of creative freedom unavailable in her native land; and, to use that emancipated eye to say things about her lifeworld which would remain unsaid at home. Her leaving was a search for a special kind of voice.

The Stranger felt trapped in her homeland. To speak out creatively and critically seemed impossible. Her decision to leave

was prompted by a desire to: **"Experience a whole new society,a whole new way of life, because I couldn't see any** [social] **movement."** To stay would have meant an acceptance of the status quo, and the denial of her own creative voice. *"If I were there now, I would still have felt trapped. . . if I stay I feel trapped, I'm not asked to express these kind of feelings".* In a new land the Stranger thought she would be able to express those feelings freely. She recalled how she thought: **" I didn't have anything to lose."**

The Crossing.

As the land of her birth faded in the distance, the Stranger reflected on her ambivalence toward leaving, and travelling to another place. She described how she had felt: **"As you pull away"**, she had realized that: **"You must return to the 'core'. I don't want to give up, or forget what I love, remember, or experienced about my native land."** With leaving she had come to realize that for her there had to be some kind of return, one day.

What had happened in her life to mould her into this departing figure? Early influences, childhood isolations, personal ambitions had made visible for the Stranger what for most remained unseen. A critical eye was turned on her own world, and had served to distance her from it. Becoming aware of other worlds and other possibilities, her sense of belonging diminished. Dissonances in the everyday lifeworld were brought to the surface by an eye made newly critical by this growing awareness. A sense of isolation from the taken for granted life developed as a consequence. The need to creatively express this freshly unearthed lifeworld increased. As this desire

gained significance for the Stranger, it became ever more evident that she had to leave home if she wished to develop this critically creative eye.

So now she was leaving. How would the experience of another land affect her already sensitized perception? Would this encounter with the alien be an enriching, or a traumatic experience?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Stranger in a Strange Land[1]

Sima: "It's a different 'market', a different place to present yourself."

Introduction.

As the new shore becomes more distinct, so the native shore recedes. The Stranger has left her home for a whole constellation of reasons. What are the Stranger's expectations in this new land? A new consciousness, creative and personal fulfillment? There is an anticipation of challenge certainly: **"The stranger that crosses from one side to the other accepts the physical transfer from one familiar site to a strange new land. Who or what becomes strange; the artist that has left, or the land that remains to be explored?"** From her changing perspective, her old and new worlds constantly change in their attitudes.

In meeting the challenge of this new lifeworld, the Stranger will encounter hurt, and stimulation. How will she ensure that the pains of a relocated existence do not traumatize and atrophy her personal and creative growth? In order to deal with the inevitable problems of life in a foreign land, the Stranger must find ways in which she can effectively cope with all that the fates hurl at her. In her homeland, she nurtured a distanced viewpoint. Now further

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[1] There is no thematic connection implied in the choice of this title with the Robert Heinlein sci-fi novel of the same name.

isolated, she turns this gaze upon her new lifeworld; will her sensitized perspective cause her greater pain than is necessary, or will it provide an enriched vision of another reality? *"When I came here, things came to the surface".*

Will these surfacings be useful to her, or will they prove to be psychically damaging? The Stranger has come to another place in order to realize hopes and ideals formed in another lifeworld. Will these aspirations be squashed or welcomed by the members of this strange new world? **"Is there such a thing as 'relocation' for the artist? Does the viewer see the dislocated soul of this strange creative person?"**

The Great Adventure[2]

The notion of leaving ones homeland in search of adventure is almost as old as humanity itself. Leaving home, in the footsteps of characters as varied as Huckleberry Finn and Ulysses, speaks of a search for an experience unavailable in the routine world. "The Adventure" be it real-life, or on film is a stimulus, an experience creating a kind of heightened awareness that we all have felt at some time. Through encountering the strange and frightening, we understand ourselves more. Finding ones "self"; the "Journey", the "Pilgrimage", all speak of a sensitizing of self in a strange, alien environment. Literature, philosophy and religion speak of the sensitizing power that entering a strange new environment can have

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2 Camus, Albert. The Absurd man. The myth of Sisyphus. Penguin, 1983. "Assured of his temporally limited freedom, of his revolt--he lives out his adventure within the span of his lifetime--That is his field, that is his action." p.64.

upon an individual. An internal exploration of self is undertaken in the isolation of a new environment. Christ's days in the wilderness, his struggles with temptation and madness, allude to an ancient awareness of the power of isolation.

The Stranger has entered into a more benign, but nevertheless challenging isolation. To escape loneliness, she had to introduce herself, to tell her life story to a new "circle". Allegorically, she described her own first encounters with the members of the new lifeworld: **"A recurring image is that of a stranger that has come into a gathered crowd. She has a story to tell and would like to be heard, as with Ulysses recounting his tale to the receptive Phaecians. An undeniable aspect of the stranger-artist is that she has made a journey. However long or adventurous that journey may have been is now a part of the stranger-artists existence. As we talk of separation and distancing as a choice the stranger-artist makes, she is like any other; they too have a need to belong and to be accepted. To be appreciated is to transcend that common level of exchange. In many ways I know that seeing myself as this stranger-artist, I would like to be accepted on my own terms."** The Stranger craves an acceptance, but not unreservedly. She is protecting, holding onto something. What is that something?

The Stranger felt that, especially for the artist, it was a necessity to take a chance with the alienation of a creative distancing in order to spur on expression and fresh experience. The act of separation from ones homeland is a risk-taking. She asked the question: **"Is there a willingness to risk the unknown amongst**

migrant artists?" A new environment, a new start could engender a feeling that one had nothing to loose. For the Stranger, to take a chance could mean the prospect of hurt, but it was seen to be worth the risk: "Hurting is part of the scenario, I think". And the alternative--protection and certainty? "You build a big wall up, and you sit behind the wall, then you're dead!"

The Stranger has taken a risk, but is there not a craving for a particular kind of acceptance too? Is the search they have undertaken also a longing for ultimately, a refuge?

She described her idea of how the conflicts and isolations of a Stranger's lifeworld can also yield a particular kind of belonging. *"Conflict of cultures, 'interference'--where different cultures contact, it's like the ocean, where different currents meet"*. Was this how the Stranger saw herself, as part of an enriching flow, a mixing of cultures?

First approaches.

The Stranger approaches the new gathering with caution, mindful of hurt. She appreciates the jealous territoriality of the assembled members: "I questioned if I was intruding into somebody else's space; I was like a strange new animal coming into the pen." She must take care, lest her words or actions be misconstrued: "Being a Stranger, I'm very cautious as to how I will be accepted and understood." There is an awareness that she is not a member, she perceives herself as not belonging. She also

understands the subversive power that the Stranger archetype holds. A Stranger is mindful of the fact that she must make overtures, concessions must be made: **"Realizing that by being there [I] could disturb someone else's total idea of existence by my presence. How much impact or self-introduction should I make of myself? It was the same way with my [art]work. I was very cautious not to overload, not to disturb someone else's sense of feeling."** To disturb the equilibrium of the member group would be to invite rejection and isolation.

The Stranger stands at the gates of a new lifeworld, another way of seeing reality. Again, she perceives her peripherality. She understands at first hand the contradictions in her former, and current existences: **"We talked about strangeness, alienation, separation, leaving behind--as opposed to membership, union, familiarity, belonging, bondage, gaining new insights."** Introductions made, she hopefully awaits the reply of the assembled members.

Feedbacks.

So the Stranger undertakes life in another country. It is still a strange, unrecognizable place: **"Everything was totally strange. I felt a stranger in the environment. I didn't know people, their language, their culture, and I was very isolated."** Nevertheless, that very alienness is exciting, and the Stranger begins her search for creative fulfillment with high expectations: **"I was full of energy; 'we can do lots of things'!"** Then the disappointments began. Rejections, misunderstandings, or even outright prejudice. She

explained: "My expectations were one hundred percent positive and sure of self. You expect to come here and get the same things, the same feedback. You end up with a negative response. It's a different market, a different place to present yourself, and I think you give up." Socially and creatively, she was discovering that even the most basic of communications were flawed, or impossible. Inevitably, there was a disappointment, a withdrawal: "You isolate yourself because you come from a different background. Socially your education and your creativity is different. You can't meet with the societies expectations or standards of what they want." She had discovered that her talents, her creativity, her biography even, were neither welcome nor wanted. The ensuing isolation represented a profound hurt; her response was to try and heal that pain, to isolate herself.

An opening of wounds: A Dismembermem?

"People go there to enjoy themselves, but maybe the dancer that's dancing there happily, with the nice dress, maybe she's hiding something, carrying pain." The Stranger described what her sense of isolation had felt like through the metaphor of the dancer. Outwardly she seemed content, but inwardly she was experiencing a deep loss of self esteem, a collapse in a belief in the worth of her own biography. There was a temptation to uncritically accept all the new culture had to offer: "If she compromises a lot, and forgets about her own expectations; accepts all the social expectations in the place that person is living, that's the way of settling down for some people." Why was that unacceptable for her? She described the

attempt to assimilate oneself in that way as: "Destroying yourself." She alluded to her dancer metaphor: "--to become one image instead of two images. I've thought about other people that I've seen, or I know around me. That one person should really get absorbed, to lose, to become that one person!"

She saw assimilation as a denial of biography, a sundering of the links of emotion and memory between herself and her old lifeworld. For her, such a break was untenable. It represented a non-access to her wellspring of creativity and spirit. For others, such splits were a reasonable cost of acceptance: "It depends on your personality, how strong you feel about yourself, or your ties in your own culture. You can't see that these people come from a different country." Unwilling or unable to become one image the Stranger, dancer-like presented an impermeable shell to the world, and fostered her sadness within.

Numbness.

The shell represented a traumatized withdrawal from the social mainstream. As a suggested metaphor for the newcomer, the Stranger proposed the autistic, or traumatized child. How had the newcomer-as-child experienced such profound shock? Who or what was the perpetrator? For the Stranger, the very lifeworld itself was responsible. Ceaselessly it rained down new, unusual, frightening phenomena on the hapless newcomer: "Like a parentless child in a new place, bombarded, taking in new things; after a while--enough!" Such a retreat into isolation would make later adventurous forays increasingly less likely as time went on. A

trauma had been visited upon the newcomer. Does this victim really want to do battle with the perpetrator once more? **"You could not want to encounter anything new, because your memories of that initial bewilderment still exist."**

The Stranger had become numbed to the outside world. She described the dulling inaction of this feeling: ***"You feel strange in your environment--you have no feelings, less feelings; You get numb. Numbness, ache, discomfort; it's like carelessness, it's like when you take a tranquilizer and become numb; you have thoughts in your mind, but no action. You become numb, careless."*** This "culture shock" freezes a person into inactivity. A newcomer becomes progressively more unsettled and disorientated, as she faces others, problems, day to day life. This further compounds the sense of numbness. With such trauma comes a voicelessness, an inability to express ones world satisfactorarily.

The Stranger told me of a foreign TV director, a vigorous, charismatic man, who came to live here. When he first came, he could not speak English. Language was a problem, as his work involved much use of language: ***"So he wasn't able to do anything at all. He became very isolated. He could see things on TV, and he could see things which went wrong; but he couldn't do anything!"*** He had become voiceless in his own lifeworld. It had become impossible for him to communicate fully. Unable to express himself socially or creatively, he had to all intents and purposes been struck dumb. The Stranger described how she had felt when her own voice had touched no attentive ears: **"I can get very emotional-that's where the disturbance is; sometimes frustration."** How can the

Stranger effectively introduce herself if she cannot speak her world? In order to escape the disenfranchisement of numbness, the Stranger must tell her story. What must be done? What form could this story telling take?

Alter-images

Like the dancer, the Stranger "*Put on a face*" in order to cope with the exigencies of everyday life. Nevertheless, she jealously guarded and cherished the memory of her former existence. Wishing to creatively express her unfolding biography, she continued to draw from her past in the creation of her artwork. However, the lack of contact between her social and her more introspectively private existence, was causing a rift, a strain, in her lifeworld: "*You become two persons, like an 'other-image'. So it takes you away from what you have. You become a different person, you make adjustments; that's not you, it's what you've created to make a living and satisfy other people.*" The Stranger begins to perceive herself in a distanced way. She regards from afar her social actions. She returns home, and discovers that an atavistic return to a former lifeworld no longer holds so much meaning. "*You can't always live in two different feelings, or carry two different feelings; you can't live in two 'places'. Sometimes you want to think about your inner self, but sometimes it seems that you don't have time for that.*" She discovers that she occupies a limbo, at home neither in her new, or old world. Nevertheless, almost imperceptibly she was moving toward a resolution of these strains, a balancing of faces and lifeworlds. Numbness and distance remain in her dealings, but a

"working model" forms. The Stranger, in her alienation from self and society, sees where her outward pointed face can and cannot fit. In so doing, she comes to understand her new lifeworld more: "*It's just everyday like a scene off a movie for me. I see things there, I see myself in some parts that I fit, and some parts that I don't; or people around me, everything. You always know that they are there.*"

In her numbness, and lacking in a "true" voice, the Stranger has gained a provisional resolution of the existential strains of her world. However, her simultaneous grasp on two lifeworlds, holding together her entire biography, is tenuous. How then, can she maintain this grip? Can she hold onto everything, or are losses inevitable? The Stranger aspires to an understanding of her whole experience. By what means can she attempt to realize this goal?

Struggle

The Stranger described her grasp on two lifeworlds, guarding her whole biography, as Struggle: "*Struggling, it's where the two people 'thing' comes in. You struggle because you want to survive, and you don't want to lose yourself.*" It describes the ceaseless attack mounted by a strange lifeworld on a newcomer's perceptions, and the attempts that she makes to hold onto a full self. The creative Stranger, in her wish for a creative fulfillment must address a new audience: "*You're like a small dot when you start, and you want to make this small dot visible to other people.*"

The struggle marks a rise from numbness, a determination to prevail. The notion of creative "destiny" again comes to the fore.

Creative expression formed the nub of her escape from numbing apathy. She realized that to regain a voice, and importantly to make people listen, she had to assert her presence in the world: "I didn't want to give up. To live here and survive, I had to struggle. I'd waited so long to reach this point that I could express myself in some kind of an artwork." Her commitment to struggle led her through many setbacks and tribulations: "You loose the part that was struggling, those things which you were holding so tight, as you get swept away in routine work. Being forced through 'different channels', not being able to do what you wanted, being absorbed, getting distracted from creativity."

What form did these losses seemingly inevitable, take? They were the cares, concerns, memories and forms of expression which were lost or buried in the everyday rush of a foreign lifestyle. The Stranger however, in her conscious will to retain such things, ensured at least a partial hold on her earlier history. Nevertheless, some sacrifices were necessary. How were these biographical compromises with the new lifeworld enacted?

Trade offs.

"You can't always present yourself the way you want to be, so you have to make some changes, do some compromises." Thus the Stranger represents the ineluctable reality of social and creative life in a foreign land. She is presented with some problems nonetheless, in effecting this compromise. How can she express her unfolding story meaningful to herself, when her very means of expression may be foreign to her? Alternatively, to merely persist in creating in a

way characteristic of her mother culture might be ethnically "charming", but would it represent her new experience? **"It's not as real because you can't fulfil all your desires, or do all the things you want to do, whoever you want to be--you cannot do that. Otherwise, you become very isolated, and you can only sit in a room and create for yourself. Ignoring other people and the society that you're living in, you become very isolated."**

At the two opposed poles, she regards the prospect of becoming either spiritually bereft, or an ossified cultural remnant. As a creative person, she has endeavored to gain a creative understanding of her world-as-lived. Inevitably in her sensitized way, she regards the inconsistencies, the paradoxes of her changing life. How can she come to terms with the consequent tensions, as they make their presence felt? *"The things I have seen or been, are not all* ["native"]. *Each time we as artists see our environment ,we have to respond as if we are seeing things for the first time. This sometimes causes conflict, imbalance".* The key to a resolution is her art. For the Stranger, her creative process is a means by which she can come to terms with her existence. Her art enables her to accommodate contradictions, rather than to endlessly try to "solve" them.[3] The paradoxes of the life of a Stranger cannot be totally resolved. The losses, gains and conservations that emerge as struggle continues can be made tangible as expressed in creative reflection. Is an end to this process either possible, or wanted? Certainly, there are as yet,

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[3]The Healing power of Art. New Age Journal. February, 1988 issue. Thorne pubs. A good example of this kind of creative resolution can be found in this article which chronicles a cancer patient's coming to terms with her life and illness through the practice of her painting. p.24.

no signs of it abating: **"It's a response to your kind of needs, the 'Trade-offs'. It's unresolved; do I loose a bit of being** [from my homeland] **here, and a bit of being Canadian when I'm there? Do I loose a bit as I'm doing my work and does it gain some more strands?"** The ebb and flow of the trade offs supply a dynamic shape to the struggles of the Stranger. They enable a creative "making sense" of a maelstrom of changes, contradictions, and hurt, in her world.

Coping

"How can we deal with 'dislocation'? Can you ever really deal with it?" Struggle, the trade offs, represent ways of coping. The Stranger, using a color as an evocation of the "toning down" that becoming used to something represents, described how strange, alien objects join the ranks of the ordinary: *" Experience is important to keep 'grey' an activity effectively. When you encounter something different, you may 'break down', so through experience we learn how to cope, so it becomes an everyday object, so we don't need to use our brain. We cope with it in a reactionary way".* Coping then, can become deadening, anathema to a creative Stranger, whose raison d'etre demands a critical sensitivity. Becoming more comfortable in an alien landscape, how yet can the Stranger not only find voice, but also keep it?

A fresh eye; a renewed voice

Interestingly, isolation and struggle for the Stranger means not only an effort to hold onto a historical self. It means something more. An enervating distancing from the suffocating influence of the

mother culture, and an opportunity to turn a refreshed eye onto new vistas, psychic and material. In order to maintain this fresh eye, she drew on the experiences of her life in the homeland. She realized the importance of asking the question in order to jolt both the issue and the viewer out of their taken for granted world. To ask a question, and to creatively address it was the Stranger's means of maintaining a clear, critical voice: **"My sense of art is self expression. The object or situation operates on my sensitivity, then there's the process of thinking and visualizing to turn it into a product. As a newcomer, and me being what I am, I questioned the images and I questioned its use and I questioned its relationship with the environment or with people, any stranger who came in would do the same thing initially, either do it the same way as the locals do it or in a way that would be disturbing because they're not used to it. Because it's new I think that you would react to it."**

In her struggle, the Stranger asks questions. In the creative expression of her lifeworld, she continues to ask these questions, communicating these notions to a wider audience. The questions, born of an existence spanning two lifeworlds, bring to the surface ideas, shapes, colors and stories which span the same space. The viewer is allowed to see more of his own, and anothers, existence. The questions are formed by an opposition, or a juxtaposition. The Stranger, standing on the fringes of two worlds perspectively, is able to unearth more about both these places by this positing: *"In order to identify the color black, you need white, in order to realize the light,*

you should have shadow. Its an analogy for when you face another culture".

Settlement.

The Stranger, through her art, has found a means by which she could speak her world to others, and also harmonize some of her turmoils. Does she feel a part of the new culture though? In her homeland, fitting in was a social skill, an etiquette even. In truth, she did fit in, albeit at times uncomfortably. Fitting in has far more significance in a new place. Without it, survival itself is in jeopardy. Formerly, it had represented a childhood inhalation of cultural norms. Here, it is more of a conscious act, to be undertaken with care and discretion: "*The strangeness thing; you learn where to fit in. That is how you can adapt yourself, you say OK I fit here, and you start adapting yourself. It means it's not something that's done naturally. You're adapting yourself to something which is strange for you, or which is different from your own circle, or environment.*" The myriad adaptions of the Stranger's life are full of assumed faces, minor struggles and trade offs, and insightful creative insights on what it means to be strange. The mixing of these psychic currents can be disturbing or enlightening, for Stranger and viewer alike. Bathing in these infusions, the Stranger reviews her self. How has she changed? What lay ahead?

Who am I? Who have I become?

"I tried to carry all my 'baggage' from home, to remind myself of where I'm from, and why I'm here." The Stranger

brought her memories. She had timidly entered, and silently endured isolation and misunderstanding. Numbed by the unaware abrasions of the new world, she withdrew. Behind her shell, she saw the split in her existence and tried to seal it through action and reflection. Art became a part of that struggle, accommodating the differing strains of an often bewildered existence. Those strains had established an uneasy balance. Although creatively stimulating, the contradictions of her life caused pain and confusion: **"I wonder right now while you are interviewing me , do you see before you a Stranger, a Canadian, a traveller, a mother, an organizer, an artist, a designer, or a printmaker? And then, does it matter?"**

A means of coping was in the Stranger's hands. A way of expressing herself too. Her questions and insights communicated a new vision. Would that vision be palatable to the member-viewer? Would they be prepared to look, listen, and ultimately think, I asked her. Smiling a little sadly, she shrugged, and gazed out of the window.

CHAPTER NINE

An Averting of eyes.

Sima: "*You end up with a negative response.*"

Introduction.

The Stranger has a voice, and a story to tell. For anyone with a story to tell, it is necessary that there be a receptive audience.[1] She explained to me how such openness, on the part of the member is not always forthcoming. The member's response is usually not a violent rejection. It is something less identifiable, but nevertheless influential and pervasive. It is characterized by a certain misunderstanding, or incomprehension. All the Stranger's communications are evaluated within the context of the home, member group. Consequently the subtle nuances of meaning, or even foreign ideals and concepts, tend to be misconstrued or greeted with puzzlement.

We tend to treat and perceive the Stranger in a general way, and in so doing we hand out the same treatment to her beliefs and her creativity. This has the effect of either trivializing the Stranger's experience, making banal a lifeworld. This is exemplified in our treatment of fictional aliens: **"Are we as humans more receptive to fictionalized aliens? Do we not readily accept their foreignness in more physical terms? The fictionalized 'alien', ET**

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[1] Wolff, Janet. Interpretation as Re-creation. The Social production of Art. MacMillan, London, 1981: "The reader, viewer or audience is actively involved in the construction of the work of art, and without the act of reception/consumption, the cultural product is incomplete." p.95.

is easier to accept than the far closer 'outsider'. Why?" In accepting the Stranger, the foreigner, we seem to make a caricature of her lifeworld. This reinforces what the Stranger sees as a lack of understanding on the part of the member: **"Our society brings the global context closer to home, but if you look at people's life patterns, they don't even touch the surface of understanding adjustment problems."** How can the member learn to accept the Stranger more deeply and feelingly, without recourse to objectification and ridicule?

Ships in the night.

Is it possible for the member, entrenched in habituality, to venture forth and gain understanding of another lifeworld? In her struggle, the Stranger sees one of her goals as the sensitization of the member's perception: **"To understand what it is to come from a place; does it take a stranger to expose the obvious? Yes."** With her outsiders perception of the everyday, the Stranger notices the ironies of day to day existence. This perception allows her to creatively isolate objects and occurrences which hold her attention. In choosing a mundane item from daily life, she gives a new meaning to a taken for granted phenomena. The viewer is provided with a new perspective on his/her own world. More, s/he begins to appreciate that the Stranger does not share the same seemingly inviolable meaning structure for her life: **"It's like my shopping carts--I started photographing them. People realized the context, understood what it reflected; a symbol of the society, it**

disturbed me, I wasn't familiar to it, because it doesn't exist in another part."

Art and "Privilege"

When the Stranger talked about privilege, she meant the safe embeddedness of the member group. This taken for granted state makes the Stranger feel even more isolated. The very coziness of membership seems visible only to the outsider. Meanwhile, the members view all occurrences from the safety of their perceptual enclave. The Stranger asks: **"Are the 'locals' aware of their privileged state? Does their 'privileged state' allow them to understand people coming to Canada who don't really understand what the situation is?"** The consequence of such safety is a world view from a single perspective. The member watches the Stranger from across a gap. This gap exists thanks to the member's secure entrenchment in a particular point of view: **"Things don't always 'gel' when you meet people. There's a peculiar gap, people don't try to bridge the gap."**

Creativity falls foul of the same myopia. A particular cultural predilection makes it's presence felt in art, as in everything else: **"I find the average Canadians acceptance of art is too intellectualised and their tolerance toward emotional content too limited to their own experience."** The technocratic ethos which many North Americans take for granted colors their art, and their perceptions of the art of the Stranger. Her commitment to the technical cause is far less comprehensive. She feels that this technism reinforces the gap, and again, tends to be a yardstick by

which creativity is judged: **"Here I do feel there is a certain technically guided form. I work in a modest way, smaller and more personal."** In the trade offs, concessions must be made to this form. This enables the member to find access to the content of the Stranger's lifeworld, expressed in her art. Such trade offs however, invariably tilt the uneasy balance of contradictions in the Stranger's sense of biography: **"It is disturbing to have to rediscover a form that will convey my content."** What is this perspectival inertia? How does it manifest itself, and how can it be subverted?

Inertia.

The Stranger told me of a friend, a compatriot who came here to give some art seminars. He found his colleagues treated him differently. They were surprised he could speak English, although on his resume it said he had lived in England for fourteen years. Repeatedly they implied in their speech or manner that, "you wouldn't know that", or "you wouldn't understand", in spite of his obvious experience in the field. Although it seemed a trivial example to her, it represented nevertheless the inertia of preconceptions, and how they exercised disproportionate power in their shaping of the member's reality: **"I have had a university education, but when you say you have read a certain book, you see the amazement in their face."** The Stranger saw one of her tasks was to wash away this mind-set: **"The immigrant artist has to go way beyond that, and may confront that."**

In confronting this entrenchment, the creative Stranger wishes to ensure that her voice be heard, in spite of the opposition that she

may encounter: "*You get the resistance, the different perspective that people have.*" Her goal was to subvert the myopia of their world view through her art. Her alternative visions of the world she hoped, would provide: "*These particular people* [with] *different perspectives to appreciate your kind of work.*" A Stranger's viewpoint creatively expressed, makes the acquiring of new perspectives possible. The expression of this viewpoint demands a sharing of lifeworlds, on the part of the viewer and the Stranger alike. She used the metaphor of motherhood to explain the creative significance of art. As a highly personal yet universally known phenomenon, motherhood exemplified how a specific biography could touch many, by its paradoxical unity of universality and uniqueness. Creative expression symbolized another domain of a communicably universal uniqueness: "**A shared humanity, as opposed to being closed. Art opens up. Like talking about motherhood to someone who's closed; the notion's so universal. Art should do the same thing, it's the same context.**"

Patronage.

"**If a person has always been in that country, there's no need to open up, they're safe in their niche.**" The complacent coziness of the member can form a profound threat to the Stranger; that their voice, their expression will be not so much rejected, as simply unnoticed. The member must make an effort to sensitize himself to the newly arrived Stranger. That effort is not always forthcoming. How then, can the Stranger command attention from this fickle audience? "**If they do take an interest, it's not very**

sincere because there's no need, or understanding that your whole being can influence, enrich their lives." What if the member has a sense of moral, cultural, or economic superiority over the Stranger? **"If you're powered, and have a sense of confidence, you don't have to take in influences."** The deadening, numbing power of such cultural inertia for the Stranger can effectively still any voice she might have of her world: **"Due to self-assurance, they won't take on new ideas from other cultures. The 'self-autonomous', 'acultured' person is that person who won't accept or acknowledge the influences that come into his daily life."**

The Stranger nevertheless has a means by which she can at least unsettle this solidity. Merely in the act of living and creating here, she can sow the seeds of doubt in the mind of the patronizing member. An awareness of the Stranger grows. However, this process must be undertaken with care and tact: **"By being here I could disturb someone else's total idea of existence by my presence. I operate on the idea that everything should be on its proper proportion and control. I had a difficult time when I first came here doing my work; I'm not worrying so much now."** The Stranger and many like her sow critical seeds of doubt which drift into every field of life. It is those seeds which have the capacity to enrich and enliven our lifeworld. As part of her trade offs, this new fertilization is a significant part of a Stranger's contribution: **"That's the exchange, the trade-off. To be vital, a culture must accept change."**

The Shout

In his painting, "The Scream", Edvard Munch evokes the pain of isolation, and the silent scream which no-one can hear. To make that call audible, and to escape this numbing silence, it is necessary that the Stranger through her creativity, effect a change in the consciousness of the member. This inertia of taken for grantedness that serves to perpetuate a newcomers isolation can be weakened by a Stranger's creative perspective: **"I just want to to get at them through my work. To 'sow the seeds', subvert his notions. Their self-expression is limited to their own understanding and experience. I would like to penetrate that barrier and make my story as important as their story. The Stranger-artist has the power to disturb that shared world view. The Stranger-artist's journey or change brings to the surface many questions, fears and prospects for herself, and therefore the potential is there for her to bring to the surface 'disturbances' that reflect societies norm of perception."**

In this bringing to the surface of disturbances, the Stranger opens up new choices and options, not just for herself, but for the member too. **"You have that optimum choice if you expose yourself to that diversity of culture."** For the Stranger, fresh openings and alternatives are revealed which provide a greater sense of belonging, and a chance to contribute meaningfully to the new social milieu: **"You get a sense of security and comfort, a sense of not having to absorb anymore. You know when you feel you've reached somewhere? "**

Until now, she considered herself a newcomer, trying to cope with a strange new culture. Approaching carefully, she was mindful of potential rejection. More confidently now, feeling greater permanence and solidity in her place in the new lifeworld, a change in perspective has occurred. Where she stands in her relationship with old and new lifeworlds has transformed. She now has the confidence to look back at what came before, and bring it more fully and confidently into the present. The rift between her two worlds, if not sealed, has at least been spanned. She can now move more easily back and forth throughout her history, and bring a more complete biography into play in the present. How does this moving back and forth feel? What does it mean for her as a creative Stranger?

CHAPTER 10

Familiarity.

Evelyn: " **When does belonging happen ?**"

Introduction.

The perceptual shift between old and new lifeworlds marks an access to a whole life's biography for the Stranger. An awareness of a whole life's history grows, rather than a chronological compartmentalization. This freedom of movement exposes a previously concealed necessity. Survival in a new place is no longer so difficult. The need to psychically make amends with ones homeland gains significance. An attempted coming to terms with old problems can reopen old wounds. Nevertheless, the Stranger realizes that such a chance must be taken, in order that a gentle flow of memory between old and new lifeworlds can be affected. Old traumas and misgivings have to be dealt with, in order that they do not restrict the stream of recollection. Needless to say, such a process is fraught with difficulties, and is never complete: **"That's what's difficult, that's what I mean about resolving two worlds. A constant going back and forth."**

Can such a radical balancing of two markedly different cultures be feasible for the Stranger? Any balance can only be achieved with a keen awareness of exactly where one stands. The Stranger is no exception in this respect. She stands, newly arrived in a culture. She

looks back at her mother land, which now seems more distant.[1] Her memories, her perspective on the old world now have a distance to them. She now feels able to regard her old world more critically: **"It's not nostalgia; its almost as if you carry round certain images which gain more focus when you move away."**

Viewed from a distance.

The Stranger's distance has allowed her not only to critically view her new world, but also her old. Inevitably, this perspective is inextricably linked with her creativity: **"Having this view from a distance, being removed enough to be truly involved with the act of creating, it's a paradox!"** The Stranger finds herself in an intriguing, if uncomfortable position. She regards the two sectors of her world with some critical distance. How does this affect her conception of who she is, and where she belongs? The ever-changing texture of her life makes her keenly aware of the endless transformations of her consciousness: *"What I am today is quite different from what I was yesterday, or will be tomorrow"*. Nevertheless, her mother culture has left a lasting legacy with her. Her original language, education, and acculturations will always exert a profound influence. They have: *"Ipstalled a gyroscope which keeps running, it's still there"*.

The spinning, delicately balanced shape of the gyroscope aptly describes the finely tuned sense of self that shapes the Stranger's experience. Rather than feeling umbilicus-bound to a native culture,

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[1] See Appendix A. The Bridge

the Stranger comes to see her original home as a creative wellspring, a source. She is not part of a culture, *"the culture is myself"*.

The Stranger translates and interprets her experience from this particular stance. She gauges what she feels and thinks with her current needs in mind. In this process of translation, interpretation and reflection, she gains a familiarity with her whole biography, adapted for the present. This brings a kind of comfort. As the older and newer lifeworlds become more comfortable in each other's presence, so the constant movement back and forth slows. The Stranger is now most comfortable in the present. Nevertheless, the flow of personal history is still not without irreconcilables, nor will it ever be. She has however achieved a careful, gyroscope like balance in her world as lived. It is an at times precarious balance. Will this newly formed familiarity turn the Stranger ultimately, into member? Is familiarity the death knell of the Strangers isolated creative stance?

Familiarity.

"Sometimes, I feel very comfortable, so much so that sometimes I feel removed from others like me. They were like foreigners to me." The Stranger no longer identifies herself as much with newcomers, the recently arrived. Her sense of belonging in the new place is now stronger. Nevertheless, she does not consider herself a member. To do that would be in the Stranger's view, a betrayal of her sense of biography. Rather, she begins to move toward those who share a desire to creatively speak their world: **"I tend to gravitate toward others that are like me in**

mind and energy. I do gain a certain type of belonging." She now begins to perceive herself not so much first and foremost, as a Stranger, but as a creative Stranger. She sees the opportunity to share her thoughts and feelings with a diverse collection of people, who nevertheless possess a common means of expression: **"When does belonging happen for the Artist? Belonging always happens for me when when I feel that people understand me and understand my work and thus accept me for all that I try to achieve by way of communicating."**

The Stranger becomes more comfortable. She has grown used to the environment, and has woven a complex fabric of friendships, relationships and acquaintances around her. Nevertheless, a gap exists. There is still the inertia of habit and attitude which cloaks all of us, and which prevents a full understanding of what it means to be a Stranger. There is still the often unavoidable necessity to generalize, to objectify the words and behaviors of someone who is still in many ways foreign. How can this cloak of misunderstanding be thrown off?

Those whom she has around her primarily must have an openness, a desire to listen. For the Stranger's part, she must find a way to clearly and unequivocally proclaim her sense of historical being in the world. She now has the confidence, creatively and personally, to state where she is from, where she is now, and where she intends to stay: **"To be comfortable enough to say yes, I can go back home. And, expressing my ideas because they're still very foreign to a lot of people. That strangeness and familiarity."** The Stranger must inculcate understanding through a

particular kind of creative statement, which she calls the "Home Act".[2] The Stranger told me how through a journey, creative and physical, she enabled friends and loved ones to understand her sense of being more deeply: **"Belonging happens for you when you're accepted. Maybe my sense of belonging was too strange, so my friends accepted my talk as part of the 'baggage', but bonding got strong when I decided to go home. My Canadian family saw the violence in the papers, what I had been saying all those years was happening, it wasn't just baggage[3] anymore, it was reality. Before, it had been too distant. My whole identity with my homeland integrated with them. Caring for me, they had to re-understand the total context that I came out of. That's what gives me a sense of belonging coming back. 'Aha! now we know what you're talking about!' It's funny how seeing is not always believing. Marco Polo got put away when he came back. Nobody shared or understood; the amount he had absorbed and was trying to share. He had a need to share."**

The Stranger's act had wedded her community's generalized knowledge of a situation in her homeland, with their specific awareness of herself as a person. The general and the particular were fused. In so doing, an enriched understanding of the whole biographic context of what Strangeness meant was created. Obviously, not everyone can undertake such a physical journey.

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[2] See following chapter of the same name.

[3] "Baggage" is what the Stranger terms the ideas and behaviours which she brings to a situation, ideas and behaviours which are often not understood, but are nevertheless allowed for on the part of friends and loved ones, as being merely a manifestation of her "Strangeness", and "Foreignness".

Nevertheless, the synthesis of general and particular can be creatively realized, accomplished by the psychic journey which art represents. The process of art can take on the quality of a rite of passage, staking a claim to a new, comfortable sense of being. **"Comfortable, is being able to work. I'm more comfortable with myself, and with my work."** Working marks a self confidence, a permanence. It also states a determination to be heard, so that: **"My personal history, foreign vocabulary, and novel ways be acknowledged as part of my identity."**

How does the Stranger's sense of biography of emerge in her art? *"You may call it memory; bits of ideas, feelings, seeing bits of meaning and atmosphere, they accumulate. They're mixed up together, and they come to the surface in my work"*. For the Stranger, her artwork provides an opportunity to creatively realize a reintegration of her whole experience. It also communicates her sense of being to the viewer, and to her "community". It enables her: **"To belong because you** [the community] **understand the notion of strangeness."** It is indeed, the Stranger's embodiment of "near and far", as Schutz (1971) would have it, that the community comes to appreciate her for. In their willingness to learn more about her, they have succeeded in understanding more the world they live in: **"The Stranger-artist gives humanness an added dimension, that of dissimilarity. We are all the same yet different. The thrill and fear of encountering a Stranger is to discover that intriguing dimension of strangeness which we all have the capacity to comprehend."** The creativity of the outsider, the Stranger, brings that added dimension to the member's lifeworld. It promises new

views on the mundane and the exotic. It asks questions that shatter complacency.

The Stranger describes how her art became a declaration of belonging. What of earlier belongings though? Has the Stranger been able to retain a sense of continuance from her mother culture? Had new attachments sundered an empathy with an older way of living and creating? A rebalancing of the gyroscope, another resolution of two worlds, had been undertaken. A voyage home. Lest old memories rankle and the flow of memory be stifled by pain, a new understanding of the homeland in the light of new experiences, had to be effected. What was the Stranger's experience as homecomer? What did it mean for her as a creative Stranger in the new land?

Mending Bridges.

"You can't break a hundred percent with the past; that's when you really become two persons." It is with this awareness that the Stranger returns to the land of her birth. She hopes to ensure that such a break never occurs. She returns not to stay. Her sense of belonging is elsewhere now. She returns to forestall a break with her past, and the pain and isolation that this would bring. She wishes to: "go back without bitterness." Her visit is designed to ensure that she may return again and again, in her imagination as much as her physical self.

The Stranger returns "home". Is it home anymore though? Many things have happened to her. She has grown accustomed to another way of living. Habitually, she speaks in another language.

Her very values have had to adapt to a different way of life. As a homecomer[4] she sees the land of her birth in a different light. The Stranger has developed an image of the land she left. In her sojourn far away, this image has supplied a model of what she remembers life in that land to mean. This picture has informed her sense of continuing biography in the present. It has gained a reality of its own in the mind of the Stranger: **"It becomes more real; that's why I went back, it's to reinforce, verify that feeling, to find out that it's not all fantasy--as opposed to what actually does exist now. The country could develop and change; you could sit there longing for something that doesn't exist anymore."** She is about to discover to what extent this model is fantasy and idealization, and how much her image can be confirmed by fresh experience. **"I came back to look for what I loved and left so long ago."** Would she find it, or was the subject of her love a myth, a creature of her mind?

On her arrival, the Stranger finds herself in an ironic situation. Her life in a foreign land has given her behaviors, dress, attitudes which can be classed as foreign. She is treated as a Stranger, yet she is somehow familiar. **" 'Here's that stranger again'; I knew the people were watching me. I knew I was foreign to that place. They always knew I came from a foreign land. I began to feel secure because I was strange--but there was something very native about me."** The not-quite Stranger's unity of near and far, native and strange, intrigues the member group. This leads them to

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[4] See Broderson, A. Editor. The Homecomer. A. Schutz, collected papers II. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1981.

curious speculation. As they learn of her native past, they attempt to identify which of her behaviors are native, which are foreign. The inevitable generalizations emerge. " **'Today you're Canadian', they would say, about the way I behaved. They would shuck off their responsibility to probe deeper.**" Rather than discovering more about what it means to be a Stranger, the member group have merely succeeded in confirming their own group membership, by their identification of what they deem to be foreign. As time passes however, the homecomer becomes more familiar. Now considered a returning native, she is listened to with more openness than would be a total stranger, who would not know the nuances of introduction and communication of the native group. The not-quite Stranger's words carry the authority of a wider experience than is accessible to the stay-at-home. Consequently, her story has a telling mix of foreign and familiar, exotic and parochial, which holds the member's rapt attention. The Stranger's creativity opens the member's eyes not only to other worlds, but also their own: "**She said someone living here couldn't do this kind of thing; it needed you to get away to see it, because somebody in their everyday life wouldn't notice.**" In returning, the Stranger too experiences fresh insights: "**You're placed in a foreign context. You come back and familiar things become so sharpened or intensified because they didn't exist for such a long time, or they carry a whole new significance.**"

There is pleasure and there is pain in these new significances. Old memories and ideas are shattered, whilst others arrive in their stead. New trade offs must be made, to fit with a notion of existence

re-forged in a foreign land. The Stranger asked me of these fresh trade offs: **"What is kept, and what is discarded?"** She has reworked her biography in response to her contemporary self. This remoulding for a current lifeworld is expressed in the art of this creative Stranger. The art not only touches the world of the homeland member, it touches that of the new land's member. Her art bridges the gap between two realities. More, it enriches the member's understandings of both cultures.

The new home is returned to. The Stranger approaches it with more confidence now, though. Her return to her birthplace has brought her history into contemporary focus. She sees more how past and present can complement each other. In addition, the new land changes for her when she returns. She is able to fix both worlds under a clear critical regard, less impeded by pain, nostalgia or numbness. The two places stand side by side in her imagination for the first time. She has the opportunity to creatively shift "between" with far greater ease than was formerly the case. She has the opportunity, in this fuller integration of her own experience, to enact a creative synthesis, producing an art which draws from two cultures. She can consciously move between strange and familiar, close and distant, producing an art which bridges a gap in experience, hers and ours.

In this juxtaposing of images from two cultures in one artwork, the Stranger creatively speaks her world. It sets a precedent, which becomes an avenue for further cross fertilizations of ideas and expression. It is the antithesis of an ethnocentric inertia. It does not

provide a utopian universal art. Rather, it adds another strand to the warp and weft of a wider human interrelationship.

In her return, and subsequent creative expression, the Stranger feels a burgeoning commitment. She has finally arrived Home. This event requires an announcement, a statement of intent. For the Stranger, the most evocatively appropriate statement is by means of her artwork. The production of her art becomes a rite of settlement, announcing an intent to stay. This is the "Home Act".

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Home Acts.

Evelyn: **"That comfortable ah. . ."**

Introduction.

The Stranger feels settled. She approaches a harmonization of the strains of balancing two lifeworlds. Her journey home has pulled back the veil of mystery surrounding her birthplace. She feels, in the understanding that has resulted, a need to bring her whole creative biography into play in the present. This confident bringing forth states her commitment to not only a present reality, but also a past from which she draws strength. The Stranger wishes to make claim of her right to belong on her own terms: **"When an immigrant artist settles down in a strange land, she unpacks her things, shelves them and then tries desperately to engage in the activity she is trained or familiar with doing, making art. That very gesture of painting, drawing, printing, sculpting, creating is her Home Act."**

This staking of a claim, this rite of settlement, does more than announce to the member group that the Stranger wishes to stay. It marks a psychic shift on the part of the Stranger. In this Home Act, the Stranger creatively responds to her environment. In so doing, she gains a deeper sensual understanding of the world around her: **"It's unpacking; getting excited about the new environment."** This unpacking, as she calls it, represents in metaphor a decision to stay. The bags are unpacked, things are taken out, and the artwork

is commenced. Emotions, feelings of love and appreciation, can now reside as much in the new world as the old. The Stranger declares an equal right to speak her world as any other. Could it be that the Stranger is a stranger no more? **"You want to announce yourself, you want to say that you are here, that you are not a stranger, though you're from somewhere else."**

The Home Act is neither simple nor facile. It is filled by the myriad layerings of form, color, tone which together represent the intense complexity of the Stranger's unfolding biography: *"What I'm doing is not to try and impose strict meaning, I'm trying to expose myself, my coming to Canada; the sedimentations and strata, I interpret".*

Arrival.

The Stranger feels that a journey has ended, this one at least. The Stranger now brings to her audience, to her community, a representation of her biography for their perusal. In this avowal of belonging she produces paradoxically, art that graphically portrays her very difference from those around her. She seeks to inculcate an appreciation of the different route which has brought her to a mutual sharing. She seeks: **"An understanding that I had to go through all the experiences, movements, creations to get to where I am right now. Going into artwork is still a struggle. To be an artist is to believe in what you're doing. It's been confused, it's been mixed. My disturbances are what I've tried to deal with in my artwork. I think it's been done because I wanted to be understood. To be accepted I had to explain my whole sense of**

confusion, why my sense of perception is so different from your sense of perception." She strives to describe events, feelings, disturbances which may seem alien. However, it is through the very sensuality of the means of her description by which she makes these phenomena accessible to us all. Once again, the unity of nearness and distance, familiar and strange, this time in an artwork, serves to enrich a shared understanding.

Acceptance.

The Stranger now has an attentive and sympathetic community, who understand her sense of being more richly, thanks to her access to a creative expression of her lifeworld. The success of the art, in as much as it effectively communicated the Stranger artist's world, enables her to feel that she is understood, and consequently "belongs": *"All those years when I worked , I never felt a member. Now I feel I'm accepted because I and my* [art]*work am recognized* ". The Home Act allows a sense of liberation to take place. The new belonging engenders a desire to creatively explore the new environment. New insights are gained. As this searching continues, different perspectives emerge in the light of fresh experience. The Stranger feels **"energized"** , *"refreshed"*, and *"reborn"* by the new eye that the new land provides.

This rebirth speaks of the burgeoning sense of autonomy that the creative Stranger feels. No longer is she bound so tightly by the constraints of her mother culture. Neither is she silenced by the indifference and misunderstanding of the new world. The Stranger is now provided with more choices. Her psychic autonomy allows

her to decide to what extent she wishes to aspire to a sense of community. She also can decide how much she would like to maintain her artistic "critical distance". Neither of these phenomena are mutually exclusive. They both express the sensibility of the creative Stranger, whose art and whose life has been characterized by the movement between these two extremes. As ever, that movement from near to far, alone to among, continues to exert an influence in the Stranger's lifeworld.

Community or Autonomy?

The Stranger feels that she has succeeded in sweeping away much of the misunderstanding that stifled her earlier relationships with those around her. Thanks to her creativity, the freeing of her expression, these same people have grown to appreciate her sense of being more fully. They now also understand their own sense of being differently. The consequence is a mutuality born of shared learning: **"Before, they never really knew what motivated me strongly. It had an impact, meaning, on my friends, family and community. That's what gives me a sense of belonging; Trying to share, the need to share."**

This feeling of community however, is tempered by another cognizance. Just as she wishes the comfort of belonging, she also recognizes that the distance which the creative eye brings is her access to special expression: **"Aloneness and specialness is important too. Only you know what you've overcome."** Paradoxically, it is this special , "alienated" expression which has forged her particular kind of belonging. To belong, she must be

separate. Creatively, she says:" *I don't 'condition' myself; After years of struggle, all of a sudden I have found a way to express myself, so I don't interact with other people*". She recognizes the insight that her often painful journey has brought, and the special vision it gives. She guards it jealously, regarding it as her access to voice.

In a sense the creative Stranger will always be a stranger, if she guards and encourages this different voice. She belongs, but not in the way that the member does. Her perceptions of her new world will always have an aura of the different about them. This aura may fade as years go by. It is unlikely to dissipate entirely, as her art and her memories will always serve to remind her of that difference.

The Home Act becomes the home itself. The process of making art reaffirms and rebalances a changing experience. It renews a membership born of separateness: **"The notion of home. What is it? Where is it? And what makes it "home"? That comfortable ah. . ."** For there to be such comforts, the creative Stranger resorts to her expression of the world.

The creative Stranger, in her expression of her life voyage, shows the member a widened world. She allows the member the opportunity to see his own world anew, and in so doing critically peruse it. What can this expression of one person's life tell us as artists, viewers, members, strangers, educators? Can it provide us with new vistas, pedagogically and culturally?

A special Vision?

Speaking of herself as creative Stranger, she described how she tried to be responsive to her lifeworld: *"Visual artists have to*

respond to the environment in a fresh manner each time. We have to refresh our memories; each time we see our environment we have to respond as if we are seeing things for the first time." Had this always been possible for her, though? She had come to a realization. In the light of earlier experiences, her own isolations of being had become evident to her. Numbed by her dislocations from her new world she had felt helpless, lacking in enough confidence to claim a fuller role in this new society: **"I have come to realize that all these years I have kept a rather enclosed and autistic perception of myself despite my exposure to a country that thrives on 'freedom of expression'. I was seduced by the Canadian governmental system and societal structure, but I myself have not thought it is mine enough to be relaxed about the things I have to say in my work."** Her sense of disenfranchisement from the culture had resulted in an inability to fully and creatively speak her world. The contradictions, the inertias of her Stranger's existence, had effectively stifled her voice. She wondered if this phenomenon of voicelessness was a condition unique to her as a creative Stranger: **"Are these opposing tensions, perceptions, feelings, human conditions unique to immigrant Artists?"** She felt not; the mute world of isolation was experienced by many groups in Canadian society, she suspected. If such people were to reclaim their voice on the world, creative expression had a significant part to play in their lives: **"Dealing with minorities, ethnic, cultural, women--a creative release is needed to generate self confidence. If you see yourself as oppressed you're unwilling to 'intrude' on another's consciousness."**

How could such a biographic creative release be encouraged? A creative impetus needed to be developed which helped those made voiceless by the oppressions of their lifeworld to escape their limbo. What kind of art could initiate this regeneration of confidence? Freire speaks of people enmeshed in a culture of silence.[1] These oppressed need to find their own voice on the world, in order to liberate themselves. An art speaking their lives could be part and parcel of such emancipation: **"It's a very sensitive area, that's one of the problems to understand. There's a lot of resentment, it goes into deep pain. Maybe art is one way out. If a person is creative, its one way out of feeling completely voiceless."**

Did the creative ideas of the Stranger allude to such an escape from being voiceless? Could this liberating kind of autobiographical art be taken up by others, in order that they evade the oppressions of their own existence?

An Emancipated eye.

The Stranger now recognizes the special view that her experience has provided: *"I look at expression and views from different angles."* She also sees how the creative expression of that view can expose the incongruities of the taken for granted world of the member. Her artwork can: **"Bring to the surface many questions, fears and prospects for herself,and therefore the potential is there for her to bring to the surface disturbances**

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[1] Collins, D.E. Paulo Freire. His. Life. Works and Thought. Paulist press, NY, Ramsey & Toronto: "Themes of alienation, domination and oppression typifying the world of illiterates and the landless are found within cultures of total silence and *also within sub-cultures of the first world* ." p.19.

that reflect society's norm of perception." As a Stranger-artist, she can add new and illuminative insights to the member-viewer's lifeworld. She can sensitize the member's vision. In so doing, she creates a venue for her own Voice to be heard: **"Immigrant artists give new vitality to ordinary everyday reality. The Stranger-artist has the power to disturb that 'shared' world view. I would like to penetrate that barrier and make my story as important as their story."** Bringing her creative biography into play in the present, other strangers recognize her origins, and the struggles of her experience. They understand, and can identify with her voice. This empathetic understanding represents a sharing. They bring their own life stories into their viewing of her work, and so gain a greater sense of togetherness and community: **"The Stranger artist provides the cultural baggages other strangers need to identify with a state of being dislocated."**

The creative Stranger not only provides a view of a shared experience. In the execution of her artwork, she generates alternative views, and the potential for future action. She suggested: **"The Stranger artist gives humanness an added dimension--that of dissimilarity. We are all the same yet different. The thrill and fear of encountering a Stranger is to discover that intriguing dimension of strangeness which we all have the capacity to comprehend."**

The Stranger archetypally represents the strangeness in all our lives. The creative expression of this experience touches on a phenomenon known to all humans. This sharing represented a truly multicultural vision, based on a notion of a community as a

heterogeneous assembly, joined as much by their differences as their similarities. A regaining of voice, claiming the means to achieve a liberating creativity, had given her a way to speak out, and the confidence to do so: **"The Stranger has crossed over, her presence is now to be contended with by the gathered crowd."** How would this creative confidence express itself? How were the goals of a liberating creativity to be realized in her terms, as a Stranger?

Creative Confidence.

The Stranger described her sense of confidence as a realization of the many alternatives that her different perspectives could bring. With this burgeoning awareness came a new flexibility. In her art work, imagery is drawn from an experience spanning two cultures. The Stranger identified a particular perspective however, which exacted an influence stifling to this kind of creativity. It manifested itself in its adherence to the west European "High Art" aesthetic, and its attendant disciplinary skills: **"Subjected to the educational system here I do feel that there is a certain technically guided Form."** To what extent did this particular approach to art in our schools, colleges and universities prevent other strangers from realizing a creative voicing of their lifeworld? She saw this technique oriented, form preoccupied approach as inherently restrictive to the content of her work. She found that, in her trade-offs, she had to rediscover the content of her work in a changed form. Was such a rediscovery possible in the lives of younger, more impressionable newcomers to Canada? Fortunately for the Stranger, confidence in her own creative voice enabled her to overcome this

problem: **"I'm not fighting the form so much as to get the content going. Form, I'm always uncomfortable with, because what I had to say didn't have this particular kind of technique. I'm not as hesitant now."** This willingness to take creative action in spite of institutionalized inertia, underscored her belief in the possibilities of a liberating artistic process: **"I'm appreciative of the actual notion of freedom, and what I can do in my art with that notion."**

She developed her theme of art as a potentially liberating impetus in society: **"Through my artwork, I am searching for another revolution. I'm not nervous about expressing it anymore. If the immigrant artist can continue to show freedom, the viewer may decide to take in more than just what's happening on the wall, to start thinking, a rapport."** She saw her art as an initiation of a conversation, introducing a new critical perspective on the lifeworld. This new eye would open up for the newcomer and the member alike, a place in which the creative sharing of conversation could take place: **"My work; as a preparation for tolerance of the immigrant by the member, and as a preparation for a venue for the immigrant artist."** The Stranger's art as preparatory to a newly enlightened discourse; how were we to understand this newly created communicative space, which spanned the meanings of two lifeworlds? We were returned in our conversation to an earlier metaphor, which evoked the quality of this creative space. This metaphor was the Bridge. Could the art of the creative Stranger be the Bridge, the space "between" upon

which shared understandings could be realized? By implication, was the artist-Stranger a builder of Bridges?

The Bridge.

The Stranger quoted T.S.Eliot who said, "life is a tension between birth and death". For her, this summed up her notion of the art work as Bridge. She had tried to come to terms with the paradoxes in her own life, the unity of nearness and far off, strange and familiar. Art provided a resolving suspension between polarities. This art-Bridge was a stress-tension structure, tenuously attaching oppositions. It provided a link, a means of communication and exchange between different ways of seeing and experiencing the world.

The Stranger long before, had undertaken a journey. This journey was often reiterated in her work, as she brought her whole experience into expression in the present. Each time an artwork was undertaken, a new bridge was constructed: **"The action of crossing the bridge is the action of creation, the 'process' for the artist."** The artwork provided a conceptual structure which allowed the member to glimpse other worlds: **"The work is the bridge for the viewer."** Enthusiastically, the Stranger explored some of the potentials of this newly built Bridge: **"It transports. The possibilities of what a bridge can carry across then becomes endless. Things, ideas, politics, art- all through the human persona. The artist as stranger that crosses the bridge brings with her an even more unique 'gift'. She brings stories, thoughts and feelings all packaged in his or her work, which we call--art.**

They are tales which should touch that core, if it is masterfully crafted with imagination, truth, and beauty."

In summary:

In Canada, there are many strangers who have such stories to relate. Immigrants, Native peoples, the poor are obvious examples. Nevertheless, the thousand restrictions of life in a complex, interdependant society, ensure that alienation is not their sole preserve. Many have a tale to tell, but few have the means to speak. As artists, educators, human beings, we live here at a potential nexus for a myriad creative Bridges. For this enrichment to occur, the numbing inertia of institutionalized perspectives has to be removed. One of our tasks as educators is to create this same "bridge building" atmosphere, in which all can tell their tale, and all will listen. We must be responsive to the way that creativity can express lifeworlds, as it brings daily life under the gaze of a critical eye. However, can art's contemporary role in secondary education achieve such a liberating openness? In the next chapter, I shall examine how such an emancipated view can be aspired to, and promoted.

The Stranger had spoken of the creative richness that new voices could bring to the lifeworld of a culture. New eyes and ideas could refresh and renew: **"I was charged how art got revitalized by migration movements. I hope that the influx will alert Canada to self expression in some way."**

Her hope was that the contemporary visions of other Strangers would sensitize the member to the potential cultural enrichment that such new vistas could provide. How could these visions be allowed

to surface? In the next section, I shall explore how such a possibility can be envisioned.

Our conversation had run its course. The Stranger and I, for so long partners in discourse, now had to go our own ways. It was not without sadness that we bade each other farewell. Now, I had to attend to the implications of our shared journey, and the rich potentials for action that it had generated.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The goal of a Responsible art: A creative emancipation?

A freeing voice?

Creativity is an event which describes what it means to be human. Be it the creativity of conversation, painting or theater, it describes our being in the world deeply and meaningfully. Such arts as Evelyn commented: **"Remind all humanity of its humanness. It's universality helps stop one group saying that it's more human than others."** The voice of human expression has a potential to emancipate. All too often though, other less laudable impulses give creativity a less desirable face. How can we envisage an art that could maintain a liberating face, a face describing experiences like that of the Stranger's?

For Sima, art had a responsibility to the viewer. It had to treat with care and empathy their shared lifeworld, and address its problems. It should be an: **"Informative art, it's not just for the artist, it's sharing some experience with other people. Maybe they're sharing the same thing; I care a lot about those people."** Care was of utmost importance. Not only should the artist care for her work, she should also care for her audience. She is committed to expressing their concerns, spiritual, economic or cultural. She also had a responsibility to meaningfully express her own world, sharing her own experience in order that it complement the understandings of others. In her work, the particularity of her own world should

fuse[1] with a wider shared experience. As a Stranger, Sima has a different perspective that she could bring into play. Rather than cozily confirming the precepts of membership, she can try to open up new vistas in their lifeworld: "You try to let them know that there are other worlds too, you show them that they can see other things than what they've seen so far." In this respect, the creative Stranger can provide fresh insights, while still attending to the concerns of the cultural milieu. Her art can span the gap between the worlds of the haves and have nots, revealing each to the other: "Can it make the people who don't care, care a little bit more? Yes, it can. I think you should try, because how many times can people turn their head, or eyes? They can't do it all the time. Even once, if they turn their head, they start thinking about it; that's enough, I think. A heightened awareness."

The understandings that this new vista can bring renders the world anew. More, it is a spur to expression for the viewer, who can in his/her own way enact their own voicing of the world. Sima found, in her own expression, that the flow of her biography was ameliorated by the creative process: "When you start to try to convince people to look in a different way, or educate them, that's when you look back to your old culture, without knowing."

Evelyn, Mitsu and Sima have come to enact a kind of art which enables them to speak their world with greater depth of meaning. The fragmentations of their own sense of life history have been addressed in their artwork, in a creative coming to terms with the

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[1] Gadamer, H. Truth & Method. Crossroad, NY.1986: "In the process of understanding there takes place a real fusing of horizons." p.273.

opposed tensions in their lifeworlds. Such a self-conscious harmonization of oppositions is inherently liberating, reintegrating a whole experience, in a binary[2] interaction of past and present lifeworlds: "We are free when our acts emanate from our entire personality, when they express it, when they have to them that indefinable resemblance which one. . . finds between the artist and his work."[3] This movement toward a resolution of old and new lifeworlds marks a homecoming, as epitomized by the Home Act. The Home Act marks the maturing of a contemporary awareness in a specific cultural milieu, and is hence both intrinsically creative and expressive of a sense of belonging on the artist's terms. This creative awareness is characteristic of the person who is self-consciously aware of the implications of his/her actions on the cultural stage.

In gaining this understanding, many barriers to a creative voice have first to be negotiated. One of the greatest hurdles for such free expression can be the numbing inertia that society brings to bear on the creative voice. How can that voice be liberated for those others in our society who feel numbed, oppressed by a society's expectations of them? These people could be immigrants, ethnic groups, women or indeed students in the classroom. Their learning and living environments serve to reinforce their oppression.

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[2] Curtis, James M. Culture as Polyphony: An Essay on the Nature of Paradigms. University of Missouri Press, Columbia & London, 1978. Curtis defines his notion of Binary oppositions, which he generates as a central concept in his idea of a post-modern, "Nonlinear *paradigm* (see Kuhn 1970)", thus:

> The nonlinear paradigm resolves the dichotomies of the linear paradigm (The Newtonian-Cartesian world view: See Capra 1982) into binary pairs, which interact and each term of which is equally necessary. . .One recognizes the nature of each member of the pair through the contrast which its opposite creates. p.22.

[3] Bergson,H. Oeuvres. Paris. Presses Universitaires de France, 1959. p.113.

The rigidity of social structures which do not change and adapt to Canada's ever-changing social and ethnic "polyphony"[4] not only serve to suppress the many voices of these people, but also in their inertia make social dissatisfactions and unrest more likely. How could creativity help dissolve such inflexibility? Curtis (1978) comments: "Rigidity occurs when people fail to understand that a new system of interrelationships has replaced the old one. All innovative art. . . counteracts this social rigidity."[5] Creative expression then, answers a vital need of society by its removal of the urge to self-destructive violence born of frustrated voicelessness.

In their journeys toward a self-conscious belonging, Mitsu, Evelyn and Sima have each dealt creatively with their encounters with rigidity. How can the art educator provide a means for the student-stranger to grapple effectively with the rigid dominations of his/her life? How can the psychically or physically homeless student be allowed to perform his/her own Home Act?

Doubtless, such a pedagogy would have to be highly responsive, grounded like Freire's literacy programmes, in the lifeworld of the oppressed group.[6] Also, it had to be an artistic education, steeped in

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[4] Curtis, James M. Culture as Polyphony: An Essay on the Nature of Paradigms. University of Missouri Press, Columbia & London, 1978. Polyphony:

> [Is] applied to "many-sound" or "many voiced" music in which instead of the parts marching in step with one another, and without particular interest in their individual melodic curves, they move in apparent independence and freedom though fitting together harmonically.

[5] Ibid. p.85.

[6] Freire, P: The Adult literacy process as cultural action for freedom. Harvard Educational Review, vol.40.#2, May 1970.

> Becoming literate, then, means far more than learning to decode the written representation of a sound system. It is truly an act of knowing through which a person is able to look critically at the culture which has shaped him, and to move toward reflection and positive action upon his world. p.205.

the inherently native expression of a whole, historical biography. It would be a: "Historical awareness--a critical insertion into history. It means that [wo]men take on a role as subjects making the world, remaking the world; it asks [wo]men to fashion their existence out of the material that life offers them. The more they are conscientized, the more they exist."[7] The student-stranger, as active fashioner of his/her lived reality, gains through creativity a much more profound understanding of how the world works: "Creativity occurs when cultural tradition interacts with the social process and manifests itself as a model of that process; the model serves as an epistemological operator for the social process." With the insights that emerge from such understandings, the student-stranger has the opportunity to claim greater control over his/her place in such processes.

A creative discourse.

Rather than the purveyor of a particular notion of "taste", hermeneutics sees art as essentially a communicative activity, an expression of the lifeworld of the artist, and as such, born of a particular cultural experience. It renders a particular cultural milieu more meaningful, as part of the: "Healthy decentration in the view of art, what art is, where and by whom it has been and is produced."[8] Its appreciation is based on a human understanding rather than any notions of explanation, or an objective "taste". A norm-based

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[7] Freire, P. Conscientization. Conversion. Conn,W. Editor. NY Alba house, 1978. p.298-9

[8] Alpers, Svetlana. Is Art History? Daedalus. Vol 106. 1977. p.3.

aesthetic "truth" possesses little meaning in a personal enjoyment of creativity: " Truth is seen as an agreement on aesthetic values amongst participants in the artistic community, in contrast to nomothetic or axiomatic views on artistic truth."[9] Such an artistic community is not comprised necessarily of "Artists" in the traditional sense. It can for example, be a creative "community of ideas" amongst students and art educators in the creative space of the art room. In the Canadian context, for such a sharing to have emancipatory potential, the many-cultured voices of teacher and students would need to have a polyphonic[10] quality, sharing stories equally and without preference. The art educator, as "stager" of this creative event, must maintain an openness of horizons in the discourse, and in so doing: "Assume an integrated and pluralistic society, and that the essential experiences of that society are communal and shared."[11]

A Phenomenological, or Hermeneutic approach to creativity facilitates shared agreement based on a human understanding of the meaning of such stories. It is as Kandinsky said, a mutual: "Moving in the picture, living in the picture."[12] This restores voice to those whose art would otherwise be consigned to the backwaters of the expressive realm. Just as to converse is a moral commitment[13], so to

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9 Jagodzinski, Jan. Toward a new Aesthetic. Curriculum, Media & Instruction, paper.12. Department of Secondary Education. Faculty of Education. University of Alberta.

10 See footnote 5.

11 Curtis, James M. Culture as Polyphony: An Essay on the Nature of Paradigms. University of Missouri Press, Columbia & London, 1978. p.87.

12 Reimche, D. Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944): Situating Artistic knowledge in a socio-historical paradigm. Ed.CI.685 paper. March 7. 1983.

13 See Chapter 3: Towards the Question.

create in the fullest human sense is a moral obligation to reflection and action.

Liberating views.

An emancipatory aesthetic appreciates the lyricism of form and the meaning of content; the "is" of a Newtonian/Cartesian aesthetic, with the "ought" of a Human Science perspective, synthesized in a liberating praxis:[14] " Truth of reality, as defined in a liberating artwork, means that it represents a repressed human potential. Its truth lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (Newtonian-Cartesian "objectivism") which is preventing the establishment of a higher synthesis."[15] This elevated consciousness is made feasible by an emancipating art. Its expression provides a fresh window into a richer, fuller pan-human reality. The Stranger, in coming to a new land discovers much about him/herself: "[S/he] did not merely discover an exotic landscape, but internalized a new system of nonlinear relationships."[16] S/he gains new and more wholistic understandings of dwelling on earth. By means of this provision of an opposing view of truth to the taken-for-granted norms, socio-cultural "verities" can be transcended, and a creative cultural emancipation brought closer. The personal pain of a creative and cultural estrangement would be obviated in the light of a fuller

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[14] Praxiology (as it refers to art and the artist) Jagodzinski, Jan. Toward a new Aesthetic. Curriculum, Media & Instruction, paper.12. Department of Secondary Education. Faculty of Education. University of Alberta. p.8.

[15] Jagodzinski, Jan. Toward a new Aesthetic. Curriculum, Media & Instruction, paper.12. Department of Secondary Education. Faculty of Education. University of Alberta.

[16] See footnotes 2,4.

understanding of what it means to create: "Our task remains that of preserving a utopian horizon of liberty and equality."[17]

New Horizons.

An idea central to my research, that art can emancipate and liberate, provides just such a horizon.[18] Ricoeur comments: " It is precisely the not-yet realized horizon of this promise which holds men together as a community, which prevents Utopia detaching itself as an empty dream."[19] It can aid, just as hermeneutics does: " The recovery of lost meanings and the creation of new ones, the opening up of possible worlds."[20] It can enable the creative Stranger to regain a sense of self in a lifeworld where s/he feels s/he does not totally belong. This recovery of meaning enables him/her to also open up new perspectives both for him/herself and the viewer: "To function as a pontifex, or Bridge-builder, between the material and spiritual worlds, and between art and society--moving art out of the private studio into a more wordly concern, in which politics and art become linked."[21] The unique synthesis of meanings that the artist as Pontifex can mould is exemplified in James Joyce's "Ulysses". He takes the Finn character of Celtic myth, an Irish archetype, to make comment of a universally human kind. The mythos of any community as epitomized by the Finn character, is: "The bearer of

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17 Kearney, R., compiler. Ricoeur, Paul. Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers. Manchester University Press, 1984. p.34.
18 Chapter two: Creativity and the Hermeneutic conversation. p.5
19 Kearney, R., compiler. Ricoeur, Paul. Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers. Manchester University Press, 1984. p.30.
20 Ibid. p.44.
21 Gablik, S. Has Modernism failed? Thames & Hudson, 1984. p.125.

something which exceeds its own frontiers. It is the bearer of other possible worlds."[22] The Stranger in the creative reworking of the mythos of his/her tradition in the Home Act, renders his/her biographic inheritance meaningfully anew. In so doing, s/he gains a greater sense of belonging: "Archetypal images represent psychic . . .integration."[23] In his/her crossing of physical and perceptual boundaries towards a uniquely creative homecoming, the Stranger presents in allegory a potentially enriching avenue of discovery and enlightenment for the art educator.

However, western society with its materialist technocratic ethic, operates subtle repressions on our senses and our sensibilities. A direct perusal of our taken-for-granted assumptions in a new critical light may enable us to escape what Gablik (1984) calls, "the cultural trance."[24] The differing cultural traditions of the creative Stranger can prevent us from: "Attending exclusively to western traditions of thought. "[25] How though, is this possible for the member? Is this where the creative Stranger's alien(ated) perspective comes into play? Can this same "estranged" view provide us with the opportunity to: " Compare our world view with others, and to acquire insights which defy cultural conditioning?"[26] Art has the potential to creatively transform the "real", and in so

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22 Kearney, R., compiler. Ricoeur, Paul. Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers. Manchester University Press, 1984. p.44.
23 Curtis, James M. Culture as Polyphony: An Essay on the Nature of Paradigms. University of Missouri Press, Columbia & London, 1978. p.125.
24 Gablik, S. Has Modernism failed? Thames & Hudson, 1984. p.128.
25 Kearney, R., compiler. Ricoeur, Paul. Dialogues with Contemporary Continental thinkers. Manchester University Press, 1984. p.27
26 Gablik, S Has Modernism failed? Thames & Hudson, 1984. p.128.

doing brings into sharp relief what contemporary culture does to human beings. From such a critique emerges images of possible utopian futures. Art does: " Not just mirror the present, it leads beyond it. It preserves, and thus allows us to remember values which are no longer to be found in our world; and it points to another possible society in which these values may be realized."[27] From the creative synthesis of experience of the creative Stranger comes the possibility of an expressive transcendance beyond today's oppressions. Such enlightenment promises a new sense of belonging in the world for member and Stranger alike, harmonizing the binary tensions of member--Stranger, belonging--not belonging: "Creative movements . . . have had a self-liquidating quality. Their ability to bring about revolutions in sensibility presupposes a certain tension between the [Stranger-]artist and the [member-]public. As the work communicates between the artist and the public, it eases this tension, and thus liquidates its own rationale."[28] Such liquidation does not mark the eradication of a Stranger's art. Rather, it marks a new understanding, an admittance on the part of the member. The creative voice of the Stranger has come Home, and has become Canadian.

In our bureaucratic society, modern secularism has abandoned much of the symbolism of tradition. To restore a sense of tradition[29]

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27 Kearney, R., compiler. Marcuse, H. Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers. Manchester University Press, 1984. p.77.

28 Curtis, James M. Culture as Polyphony: An Essay on the Nature of Paradigms. University of Missouri Press, Columbia & London, 1978. p.117.

29 The notion of culture and tradition that I use here is expanded upon in Chapter three, Discourse on Strangeness: Notions of Bildung, and its meaning within my discourse. p.9.

to the Stranger and the member alike is to restore to them a memory. Each can render their tradition(al) memory anew, in the light of contemporary experience. The selective trade-offs[30] of this process of recall allow past and present biography to meaningfully coalesce in newly harmonized understandings. Also a future is restored, as they are released by this process from the "instantaneous mind".[31] Allied to this is the "imaginative remembrance" rooted in a liberating artwork. This is a memory of values long oppressed by society. They have taken: "refuge in art and [have] thus preserved themselves, that we shall be able to find hints of a direction out of our present alienation."[32]

The dialectic provided by the creative Stranger's expressive critique of our society helps the individual distance him/herself from the oppressions of their habitual lives. Art can liberate through its power to sensitize, and to creatively examine. This is inherently educative: " Such an Education in the reality of ones' repressed faculties. . . would have to be based not on a mass education plan, but in small communal projects of auto-critique, abandoning the traditional tools of education."[33] Such a community sense could provide the venue for a thousand Home Acts, a statement of belonging for those strangers, the oppressed of Canadian society.

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30 For the selectivity of memory, see: Chapter three. Discourse on Strangeness: Creative Strangers. p.12. Also see: Chapter four. Themes. Sub-theme number five: Trade offs. p.8, and Chapter eight. Stranger in a strange land: Trade-offs. p.98.

31 Kearney, R., compiler. Ricoeur, Paul. Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers. Manchester University Press, 1984. p.28.

32 Ibid. Marcuse, H. p.77.

33 Ibid. p.85.

However, do all art practitioners and educators share this commitment to liberate through creative expression? In Western Europe and North America, an influential tradition in art is characterized by a differing set of axioms. Briefly, I shall now examine aspects of this tradition. The preferred view of creativity that it supports has a profound influence on the way that art is taught and appreciated in our educational institutions. Does it encourage or stifle the biographic potential of an emancipatory aesthetic?

Expanding a view of art

As society experienced the turmoil and change of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, artists (with some notable exceptions--Gauguin and Van Gogh among them) placed their belief increasingly in technology. As scientific "breakthroughs" became known, artists integrated the new concepts into their ways of doing art. As the twentieth century progressed, abstract expressionism flirted with quantum physics in its exploration of chance, and variability. With at times a more jaded eye, pop used the everyday manifestations of the communications/consumer environment as the stuff of its symbolism. Ironically enough, these two disparate "movements" both exemplify the avant-garde sensibility, born in the nineteenth century. In a nutshell: "The artist's ability to innovate, discover and change at a rate comparable with technological change."[34] Art/artists had internalized the belief in technological

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[34] Jagodzinski, Jan. Toward a new Aesthetic. Curriculum, Media & Instruction paper 12
Department of Secondary Education. Faculty of Education, University of

"progress", using a process analogous to it in the production and appreciation of their artworks. Such an aesthetic perspective, built on the foundations of the positivist interest in control and manipulation of the environment, has encouraged the ethnocentric belief amongst many western artists, art-historians, and aestheticians that "taste" is an objective standard, and applicable cross-culturally. This has ensured until recently that Western European art has regarded itself as the creative ideal, and its schools of art have perpetuated this elitist view to a great extent. Other cultures' modes of expression were judged by the same inflexible criteria of "taste".

Such an ethnocentric aesthetic has ensured that the creativity of other cultures has assumed a secondary status, being used as a scavenging resource by the likes of Picasso whenever a "primitive vitality" was deemed appropriate to his work. Alternatively it has been accorded the pejorative epithets of "primitive", "tribal", "folk" or "ethnic" art, and consigned to museums of anthropology, or folk history. Inevitably, the western notion of what art *is* touches practitioners of art in all cultures.

Nevertheless, each person is rooted in their ethnicity. This experience guarantees that the immigrant, or member of the "minority group" in Canada has a markedly differing creative perspective from that of this cultural "norm". Lupul (1982) speaks of the: "Emphasis on creativity as the core of multiculturalism,"[35] that

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Alberta. p.4.

35 Lupul, M. Multiculturalism and Canadian National identity: The Alberta experience. Education in Canada, an interpretation. Titley and Miller Editors. Detselig enterprises,1982. p.12.

it reflects a growth and development, socially and personally. Is this differing perspective represented in the creative education of our youngsters?

Pushed Aside.

In his paper Ethnic Identification and school experience[36], Jonathan Young observes the same perspectival inertia at work in our schools as the Stranger finds in a wider social milieu. Rather than seeing a student's ethnicity as intrinsic to a personal biography, it is presented as an objectified topic to be studied. A consequence has been: "Much alienation of the young, who cannot readily identify with norms, institutions and customs imported from other parts of the world."[37] As Simas', Mitsu's and Evelyn's stories showed, identity, of which ethnicity is a part, is constantly being reworked as a response to an unfolding biography. However in our schools, ethnicity is isolated from its biographical embeddedness, and treated as an unchanging object for analysis and classification. Ethnicity is characterized as belonging to a specific "place" in space and time. It is employed as a means of organizing an understanding of social, cultural and racial attributes, as they differ from the social norm. In other words, rather than treating it as an ever-unfolding creation of an individual's identity, it is used as a means of categorization and control. Such a bureaucratic packaging of ethnicity effectively

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36 Young. Ethnic Identification and school experience. Jackson, 1984.

37 Lupul, M. Multiculturalism and Canadian National- identity: The Alberta experience.
Education in Canada, an interpretation. Titley and Miller Editors. Detselig enterprises,1982. p.12.

ensures that it no longer is seen to address the lifeworld of the student. Rather it: "Serves as a resource for the compulsory and universal enforcement of an explanation of ethnicity and cultural difference which is guaranteed not to disrupt the status quo."[38] The inertia leans toward uniformity and homogeneity rather than diversity and heterogeneity. For the educational bureaucrats, there is little realization of the qualitative richness of: "Diversified, heterogeneous cultures [which] are richer in total content, meet the needs of more people, bring more satisfactions, and provide more alternatives."[39]

These restrictive practices separate the student from his/her lived experience of ethnicity. It is delivered to the student as an imposed, static model. Consequently, s/he is encouraged to see ethnicity disembodied from the lifeworld. The perspectives of the other, the Stranger is at best to be understood, not acted upon, and the fragmented, non-controversial treatment of other cultures usually reduces them to: "Artifacts for students to look at, to frames of reference for the dominant group, and to the classification schemes of images imposed upon them."[40] The ethnicity of a stranger-student's biography is thus trivialized, made marginal by this perspectival inertia of the dominant group. The lived experience of ethnicity is minimized in favour of the institutional model, which serves to deny the meaning of certain social identities, in favour of

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38 Young. Ethnic Identification and school experience. Jackson, 1984. p.3-4

39 Graburn, Dawson, Frederickson. Traditions in transition. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, 1974. p.68.

40 Werner, Aoki et al. Whose Culture, whose Heritage? Vancouver. Center for the study of curriculum & instruction. p.19

the dominant, institutionally approved form. This serves to distance the student from a full experience of his/her world as lived: "Isolation of body, mind, of experience of consciousness, leads to documentation, to a mere taxonomy of facts closed in on themselves, leading us away from, not towards, the understanding of human experience."[41] The curriculum offers no potential for the young stranger to speak his/her world: "It offered them no possibility, no building blocks--of constructing an understanding of themselves other than "other"--different, unimportant, marginal and not belonging."[42] Perversely, ethnicity has been used by the powers-that-be as a means to oppress, and render voiceless, those very students whom they are purporting to emancipate through its study. In this subordinate role, how can the student-stranger be allowed to free him/herself, and speak his/her world "life as lived earthly"? (Aoki, 1983)

To have an expressive access denied to one's full biography is the indignity that the official version of what ethnicity means heaps on the student-stranger. His/her identity marginalized, s/he feels numbed, divorced from his/her own story. The need is for a restoration of the dignity of expression of a whole biography: "Dignity demands that a person be able to examine the conditions of his or her life, or parents' lives, and not be struck by the gap that exists between the rhetoric of valuing, and the material

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41 Polakow, Valerie. Whose stories should we tell? A call to action. Language Arts. Vol.26. #8. Dec.1985. p.826.

42 Young. Ethnic Identification and school experience. Jackson, 1984. p.27

circumstances that so often speak of devaluing."[43]

Reclamations.

To enact such a restoration of dignified free expression, we as teachers have a responsibility to help the student-stranger gain access to his/her world of ethnicity-as-lived. The teacher can help the student stranger to subvert the institutional tendency to homogenize. As strangers, they have an invaluable part to play in our culture: "Advocates of diversity are generally scholars, writers, artists, scientists and chefs, as well as as religious and social minorities who feel oppressed by the prevailing culture."[44] S/he must be given the opportunity to: "Draw on the history one owns (materially organized and produced) to construct a position in subjectivity from which to understand oneself although inevitably as the Other."[45] In other words, the student could in microcosm, undertake an experiential voyage similar to that undertaken by Sima, Mitsu and Evelyn. The self-conscious "homecoming" which these people have enacted was marked by an understanding of how the binary oppositions of their lives could be creatively harmonized in a Home act. How though can the teacher enable the student Stranger to voyage thus, and perform his/her own Home Act, when the very institution s/he works in tends to legitimate those very dominant group values which are instrumental in the student-

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43 Young. Ethnic Identification and school experience. Manicom 1984. Jackson, 1984. p.9.

44 Graburn, Dawson, Frederickson. Traditions in transition. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, 1974.

45 Young. Ethnic Identification and school experience. Jackson, 1984. p.24

stranger's and his/her own, subjugation? How can the stranger-student be allowed to harmonize under such conditions this: "Dissonance between the culture of the home and the 'mainstream' culture of the school without devaluation of the home culture?"[46]

With such a centralized inertia of bureaucratic ethnocentrism at work, an emancipating, "homecoming" expression of biography can only be fostered at the local, individual level as a personal commitment on the part of parents, teachers, students, and administrators. In their interactions and struggles, they can create processes of critique which unearth the taken-for-granted restrictions imposed by established educational and cultural practices. In so doing, they can gain liberating access to a free expression of biography, of which ethnicity and art are both a part. In this stance teacher, student, parent and administrator, in their critical opposition to the status quo, gain the "critical distance" of the Stranger as they bring unconscious oppressions to light.

In this sensitized position, perspectives are shared. Once this process of critique is initiated, the world is never the same again for any of the participants. As one opposition is unearthed, others appear at its peripheries, and must be acted on. In a creative opposition to the lifeworld's injustices, the student artist brings a biographic form of artwork into play as the vehicle of that critique. In its exposure of hidden inequalities, such art becomes the vessel for an active ethnicity, voicing social comment and suggesting alternatives for change. This kind of art is intrinsically emancipating;

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46 Pacheco, Arturo. Cultural pluralism. Journal of Teacher Education 28.3, p.20.

it is the student-stranger's Home Act. In its understanding of oppositions and conflicts of the student's lifeworld, the cacophanic voices of an oppressed reality can be transformed and harmonized into the polyphany of an individual expression of lived ethnicity, ever transforming in response to a changing cultural milieu.

It provides future vistas not only for the student-stranger. The "member" student too, is confronted with an alternative world view, provided by a contemporary. The stranger-student becomes a creative bridge builder, and their artwork is the bridge that other students, teachers or viewers may traverse to different visions of reality. This shared crossing marks a fusing of horizons and a new sense of community for all involved, creating a sympathetic venue within which more Home Acts can be enacted.

A fundamental pedagogic question asked by my thesis should now be dealt with. How can the individual teacher establish a fertile and creative "soil" in which this critical expression can take place? First, s/he must occupy the position of the Stranger for him/herself. S/he can effect this stance through his/her self-conscious opposition to being co-opted by a system which perpetuates the oppressive inertia. The normally taken for granted roles s/he is allotted, and which s/he adopts as a teacher must be critically examined. S/he must make the moral decision to distance him/herself from them: "If the teacher agrees to submerge himself into the system, if he consents to being defined by others views on what he is supposed to be, he gives up his freedom to see, to understand and to signify for himself. If he is immersed and impermeable, he can hardly stir

others to define themselves as individuals."[47] If s/he chooses the alienated stance of the Stranger, the teacher tries to inculcate the same questioning, critical stance on the part of his students. S/he will not try to impose his or her own set of culturally bound standards on his students. S/he will question, trying to bring the taken-for granted forth into a consciously critical light, attempting to provide a fertile soil for the growth of awareness. A space for radical new visions forms, where taken-for-granted assumptions which perpetuate oppression are challenged.

The generation of these new visions is inherently creative. In the creative spirit of hermeneutic discourse, the teacher is always: "Seeking the communicative gesture and the expressive word with his students, co-existing with them, opening up perspectival possibilities [in the] happiness of reflecting together."[48] In this equality of sharing, both the teacher and student alike use a stranger's perception to re-view their taken-for-granted world. In addition, the Stranger as artist, immigrant or "ethnic minority member" can also re-view their world in order to regain their expression of a whole biography of lived ethnicity.

With its capacity to disclose deep personal meaning, art can yield profound understandings, it can be a "sediment of [the] soul".[49]

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47 Greene, M. Teacher as Stranger. Educational Philosophy for the Modern Age. Belmont, California, Wadsworth, 1973. p.270.

48 Ibid. p.270.

49 Mitsu reworks his sense of being with paint. Ricoeur, in Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers describes a similar impetus of language: "To rework language is to rediscover what we are. What is lost in experience is often salvaged in language, sedimented as a deposit of traces, a thesaurus." p.28.

In our educational institutions however, traditionally art has followed the line set by "the experts".[50] Nevertheless, with the current reassessments currently taking place in the art world, it has become increasingly clear that creativity far exceeds such ethnocentric limits: "Authorities are no longer in the position to legislate standards for individual taste and appreciation. Connoisseurship is questionable to many."[51] The traditional notion of art itself is in question. Some suggest that western culture has: "Created an artificial category, a Platonic construct, namely 'art' and assume that it corresponds to an objective reality".[52] Indeed, as we often forget in our parochial way, the very notion of art does not exist in all cultures: "Few societies have a separate category analogous to our 'art'."[53] We should be keenly aware of our own predilections when we teach art to students whose home culture may not share the same categorizations as our own.

The demise of the traditional artistic perspective provides a creative openness. Fratto (1978) alludes to the liberating potential of such an unburdening: "[The] non-definition of art can contribute to the demystification of aesthetics in our own society. In recognizing that 'art' is not separate from 'life'--we can encourage the laymen, the non-artists, [the strangers!] to reclaim for themselves the right to make their work pleasurable and beautiful."[54] So far, schools have

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50 See: Chapter One. Docile Bodies? p.2.

51 Greene, M. Teacher as Stranger. Educational Philosophy for the Modern age. Belmont, California, Wadsworth, 1973. p.291.

52 Fratto. Undefining art; Irrelevant categorization in the anthropology of aesthetics. Dialectical Anthropology. May 1978.vol.3.#2. p.134.

53 Ibid. p.135.

54 Ibid. p.137.

been slow to take advantage of this fresh openness. Overwhelmingly the traditional notions of ethnicity, and by implication art, persist. Nevertheless, this creative space has been occupied by some. This occupation has the educator assuming the critical stance of the Stranger, showing emancipating possibilities to his/her students.

A small scale, critically minded project taking just such a critical position was undertaken by a High school art teacher and his students in Lima, Ohio.[55] In their creative critique of local institutional inertia, they adopted a Stranger's view of their previously taken-for-granted environment.[56] Their co-operative execution of an artwork, that critiqued the local art association's autocratic decision making process, enabled them to assume an active voice in the running of their own town. In this action, they gained a new eye on their world, assuming greater control of, and a voice in, their own lives. In addition, they heightened general awareness of hitherto unknown restrictions. Both individually and collectively, they exercised their rights as citizens, voicing their criticisms of public policy in an expressive, "artistic" manner. Their creative, discursive action loosened the grip of the bureaucratic and aesthetic experts on their creative and moral decision making. These actions run counter to a social trend, where: "Citizens are confined to narrow realms of influence and have virtually no voice or ability to make known their opinions in the vast majority of decisions that

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55 See--Blandy. Art, social action and the preparation of democratic citizens. Art in a Democracy Blandy and Congdon Eds. Teachers college press, 1987.

56 For a full description of the circumstances, see Appendix E.

affect their lives."[57] The consequence of such oppressive disenfranchisement, unsurprisingly is a feeling of voicelessness, of being "numbed". Life loses meaning and coherence.

Taking such liberating action stems this erosion. It also creates a "space" for expression, both creative and discursive. It is a space already used by the myriad unofficial and semi-official cultural, religious and political organizations. This venue functions as a shelter for the myriad perspectives of those who do not adhere to the accepted, institutionalized norms: "Reactions against uniformity and conformity come from persons in the creative sphere, from youth seeking alternative values, from all questioners of assumptions and conventions such as nudists, religious pioneers, and minority group spokesmen."[58] In their creative voicing of discontent, the teacher and students opened up their art room as such a critical space. The art classroom was transformed from a place of oppression into a venue for a creative, constructive voicing of discontent. Sheltered in this creative space, students were able to speak their world through their art work. They can: "Through this art, test the world, accept the real, reject the illusory. They can reproduce the world in their own image--in the image that they themselves produce."[59] Also, through this enquiry, creative, critical and moral, they were able to: "Discover ideologies that have become reified and

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57 Blandy. Art, social action and the preparation of democratic citizens. Art in a Democracy. Blandy and Congdon Eds. Teachers college press, 1987. p.52.
58 Graburn, Dawson, Frederickson. Traditions in transition. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, 1974. p.68.
59 Snyder, Joel. Benjamin on reproducibility and Aura: A reading of the work of Art in the age of its technical reproducibility. The Philosophical forum. Volume XV. #1-2. Fall-winter 1983-4. p.143.

are in need of transformation."[60] In this denouncement of oppression, they propose utopian alternatives.[61] Engaging in a process of discovery, they had made their lives a little more free.

New journeys

A Stranger's reward

In writing this research, I have tried to describe more fully what it means to be a Stranger. I have also tried to convey how personal creativity can evoke more richly this way of being in the world. As we have seen in this last chapter, strangeness can be experienced as more than an existential burden. It can be a stimulating, adventurous way of living and seeing. Mitsu, Evelyn and Sima know that. As artists, educators, students--human beings, if we take the stance of the Stranger, we have a chance to render our world equally anew. This renewal has an urgency about it. If the student is to achieve an understanding of his/her often fragmented world, it must be through a harmonization of the often opposed voices of past and present, home and school. A creative Home Act provides an opportunity for such an enriched understanding. It lessens the likelihood of anomie, a miasma of despair which envelops all too many student-strangers.

My own experiential journeys brought me to the question of which this thesis is a material expression. In coming to live, work

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60 Blandy. Art, social action and the preparation of democratic citizens. Art in a Democracy Blandy and Congdon Eds. Teachers college press, 1987. p.55.

61 Freire, P. conscientization. Conversion. Conn,W., Ed. NY Alba house, 1978. I use Freire's notion of Utopia here, as: "The dialectization in the acts of denouncing and announcing-denouncing the dehumanizing structure and announcing the structure that will humanize." p.299

and study in a new country, I have come to understand my world differently and I hope, more meaningfully. The fusing of the horizons of four people in the free creative space of conversation has enabled us to share a journey, a mutual process of understanding and reflection.

In an appreciation of the significance of this perceptual voyage, the teacher as stranger can initiate similar processes in the free space of a liberated art room. In this space is room enough for many voyages toward a greater belonging. In the next chapter, I shall describe a scenario in which such a creative initiative can take place.

"Whoever you are: some evening take a step
Out of your house, which you know so well.
Enormous space is near, your house lies where it begins,
Whoever you are". [62]

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[62] Rilke, M. "The way in." Selected poems of Rainer Maria Rilke. R. Bly, Ed. NY. Harper & Row, 1981.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A Praxis of Creative Belonging: An artistic pedagogy in a free space

Creative Journeys

Traditionally, much school art has either been oriented toward the production of the finished art product to beautify the stark institutional wall, or as a vaguely expressive, therapeutic act. If the notion of process and journey were to gain an equal importance to that of the art product, a more biographical art rooted directly in the lifeworld of the student could be fostered. Process acknowledges the fragmentary quality of contemporary existence, be it creative, social, domestic or pedagogic. The unchanging, rigid structure of the art object, rooted conceptually in a fixed Newtonian universe, is critiqued by the art process, which can allow the student to swiftly respond and include the contradictions and oppositions of his/her culture as lived. Such a creative initiative in itself brings institutional expectations and coercions into sharp relief. Established practices could be critiqued and creatively acted upon within such a dialectic.

A Creative Praxis.

To initiate this process, students would be encouraged collectively and individually to make collections of objects culled from their lifeworld, develop multi-media journals, create displays and organize discussions and protests. Such activities would

creatively recognize the "formative experience of popular culture".[1] These activities would not be seen as preparatory to making "a piece of art" in the traditional sense, but as artistic events in themselves. The images and issues of their daily lives would be directly introduced into this biographical art-process, in a pedagogic recognition that: "We can understand the present only by responding to the images and experiences of the present."[2] The stress of the work would be on its story-telling, descriptive qualities, rather than on its adherence to or perpetuation of, any one set of aesthetic norms. Consequently, each student of whatever ethnic or social origin would be furnished with a greater opportunity to speak his/her world, protected for a while in this "space" from the suffocating pressure of institutional expectations.

This ever-developing interrogation of the lived world can break the teacher and student unexpectedly out of the cultural trance, providing fresh insights for emancipated understanding. Conceptual bridges could be built by student and teacher alike across disciplinary, social and ethnic boundaries, including rather than excluding. Under these creative circumstances, the whole environment becomes the venue for acts of creative critique, rather than any isolated art classroom.

When work has reached a condition of completion, the teacher's response would not be to evaluate, dismiss or validate it. Rather s/he could pose fresh questions, attempting to unearth new

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[1] Curtis, James M. Culture as Polyphony: An Essay on the Nature of Paradigms. University of Missouri Press, Columbia & London, 1978. p.161.
[2] Ibid.

perspectives and creative challenges emerging from the art process. The ensuing discourse could become the basis for thought and discussion leading into a myriad opportunities for further creative action and reflection. As an art of praxis, student and teacher alike can face the challenge of the lifeworld with a biographic expression that has a cutting edge of inquiry. Their own life journey as expressed in their art could be the means by which they could challenge the oppressions of their lives. In this expression, existential contradictions and oppositions can be accommodated in a creative understanding of the lifeworld. Such understandings engender a greater sense of belonging on the part of the student, as his/her creative rendering of the world becomes a Home-making Act.

Voyage to Belonging

I shall now examine in more detail the potential for such an approach to creativity. I shall do this by suggesting a specific pedagogic scenario in which a creative process of reflection and expression can take place. I shall employ some of the themes and metaphors generated from my discourses with Evelyn, Sima and Mitsu in this scenario. Thus, the life tale of the creative Stranger is brought into meaningful play in the classroom. These themes provide I believe, a useful conceptual focus for teacher and student alike as they undertake a shared journey of creative action and reflection on their world.

This creative process will be described in the terms of a thematic journey, an allegory of creative biography. I believe that using the notion of journey--of voyage, provides an opportunity for a

creative pedagogy with an emancipating potential for the following reasons:

1. In its understanding of an ever-changing, ever-unfolding experience, it is an appropriate vessel for a "process-ed" approach to creativity.
2. As a creative journey, it provides a conceptual model for teacher and student alike to voice their own unfolding creative biography, their own journey in the lifeworld, and their questioning of it.
3. The notion of journey also provides a metaphor for the process of action and reflection in creativity, an artistic praxis.
4. A Voyage implies a destination. In the context of a creative praxis, the psychic destination that is identified can be one filled with optimism: A greater understanding of, and a fuller sense of emancipated belonging in, the world-as-lived.

A Journey Begins. . .

All was not as it seemed

The teacher-as-Stranger sets the scene. S/he reads out and circulates among the students books, magazines, newspaper articles, which describe "factually" and creatively a radical questioning of the lifeworld which most take for granted. S/he shows movie and TV clips which describe the phenomenon of establishing a critical distance from the usually unquestioned lifeworld. Discussion is generated, in which the meaning and significance of such distancing is reflected upon. The teacher relates anecdotes from his/her own experience, which allude to this phenomenon.

Students are encouraged to describe similar events in their own lives, of feeling that they "saw things differently" for the first time. This need not take a conversational form. They could describe the experience of feeling strange in their own world by means of writing short stories, enacting short performances, or undertaking drawings, paintings, or sculptures. This creative description of disturbing events which led them to question taken-for-granted norms in their own lives, marks the commencement of the process of an unfolding creative critique, which characterizes this artistic journey. It forms an introduction to the theme of the creative journey. Students are thus made aware of the deeply biographical nature of this artistic undertaking, and how their own experience is an important, integral part of the whole process.

In subsequent time spent in the artroom, be it in class time or after school, the teacher encourages students to begin a process of collection of the bric-a-brac of their everyday lives, questioning, suggesting, encouraging. The biographical character of this process of collection is stressed. The descriptive, creative potential of objects gathered from daily life is looked at, and discussed. Students are then encouraged to begin multi-media journals, which describe by whatever media is deemed appropriate by the student, estranging events in their own lives.

The responsibility of the Stranger-teacher now, as throughout this voyage, is to join with students in reflection and discussion, suggesting and motivating, convincing students that their own particular voice on the world deserves to be heard. As in the Hermeneutic conversation, a teacher must try to keep creative vistas

open, to provide fertile ground for new understandings on the part of the student to take root. Thus the voyage is commenced.

Stranger in a Strange Land

The multi-media journals, which in part represent the material artworks of this creative journey, are under way. The teacher as Stranger must continue to question, encourage and reflect together with the students, in order that s/he can aid the student in unearthing new meaning, expressed creatively in his/her artwork. S/he begins to introduce a new perspective into the discourse. As the journals "mature", and gain momentum, so the teacher begins, with the same many-faceted, multi-media approach as she initially commenced the journey, to introduce a more far-reaching, profound notion of being a Stranger.

Culled from his/her own lifeworld, she shows a wide variety of examples of what it means to be a Stranger, in a strange land. Pictures, objects, films are brought into play which show that being a Stranger in a culture is not the preserve of the immigrant only; it can be also a daily experience of women, the ethnic minority member, the native person, the homeless, the unemployed. The notion of strangeness has already been introduced earlier, so the teacher in this new questioning, asks the student to creatively question the estrangements of his/her own existence more closely and radically. Again, the teacher should share his/her own experiences of this phenomenon with his/her students. In so doing, s/he will hopefully help the student to grow in confidence, to creatively speak his/her own world ever-more evocatively.

Discussions can be encouraged which allow the student to reflect upon where in his/her own life, s/he feels strange, out-of-place. Again, this ever-growing artwork, the multi-media journal, can provide an outlet for the student's expression of his/her own feelings of alienation. Nevertheless, willing students can also be given the opportunity to work together on performances, murals, assemblages etc., which allow them to share their ideas with the rest of the group. The school environment itself could be seen as a strange place, a stage for a portrayal of being a Stranger. In subsequent talk, teacher and students share and examine this growing picture of what it means to be a Stranger. In so doing, a critique of the oppressions and restrictions of everyday life grows, expressed both in the student's artwork and in his/her talk and reflections. In this creative praxis, conversations prompt artwork, art provokes further reflection and talk, as new insights and understandings develop.

An averting of eyes.

As students look more critically at the oppressions of their own lives, so the teacher begins to ask them how these oppressions which they have identified come about, and are perpetuated. In his/her role not only as questioner, but also "focusser" of issues, the teacher encourages the student not only to inquire into his/her life outside the school, but also into life within the educational institution. The different subject areas, the workings of the educational and other institutions, become not only sources of knowledge, but also subjects for creative critique and reflection. Disciplinary and conceptual

boundaries are implicitly critiqued by this artistic inquiry, which opens up new interdisciplinary connections, aiding a more wholistic conception of the world.

The pressures and inertia which various behaviours and institutions bring to bear on the lifeworld of the student are examined, discussed and creatively acted upon, either in the multi-media journals or other creative initiatives. The way in which these institutionalized procedures and practices perpetuate subtle repressions and discriminations are discussed and reflected upon.

However, the teacher must try to maintain the optimism of utopian futures. S/he has a humane responsibility: To help students generate liberating alternatives to transcend such oppressions, fashioned from the stuff of their own lifeworlds, and responsive and appropriate to them. In this generation of utopian horizons, teacher aids student in creating a more emancipated future for him/herself. How can the teacher as Stranger provide the conditions for such a liberating event to take place? I shall examine a possible enactment of such a liberating event in the following section.

Familiarity

So far, the teacher and students in their creative journey have dwelt on the oppressions of their existences. They have gained a more critical eye on the world, and have thus acquired a deeper understanding of it. So empowered, they can proceed to generate less alienating, more inclusive and humane alternatives for the future by means of the creative process.

The teacher must act as tireless confidence-giver to the student, offering suggestions and encouragement, and assuring the student as to the worth of his/her biographic expression. With students now more confident, the teacher must ensure that their creative voices be heard more widely. It is his/her responsibility to find fresh venues for their creativity in the wider school environment, and ultimately outside the school. The teacher acts as facilitator, the establisher of creative spaces.

Equipped with their growing critical awareness of the workings of their lifeworld creatively expressed, discussed and reflected upon, students and teacher can develop new creative initiatives, enacted before a wider audience. The biographic, often critical nature of their work will make teacher and students alike subject to criticism themselves. Again, it is the teacher's responsibility to provide not only appropriate support, but also a forum for debate, in which teacher and students together gain further insights and understandings of their world, honed by the many voices of discussion.

For students and teacher alike, this creative journey is exacting, demanding much time and effort. However, it is also an exciting and enlightening way of being in the world--creatively. All concerned gain new understandings of their world, and in so doing achieve a greater control over their own fate, and a more enlightened familiarity.

Home Acts--A Celebration

Any arrival Home marks a completion, but it also marks a new beginning. In their journey, teacher and students as strangers in their own lifeworld have gained in their deliberate critical distancing from it, a greater sense of belonging born of a fuller understanding of their world.

The process of creativity, of which discussion and reflection are a part, has brought a new critical awareness to the student, which can provide an incisive eye on the world for him/her in the future. Now more familiar and confident in his/her world, the student can creatively celebrate this newly emancipated belonging. Just as traditional cultures have their rites of passage, in which children are symbolically transformed into adults through ritual, so the newly enlightened student or group of students, can devise a ritual or an artwork which symbolizes their growing sense of an aware belonging in the lifeworld. This is their Home Act.

It could be a synthesis in any of the media at their disposal, of the experiences, images, and feelings garnered from the many processes of their artwork enacted during the creative voyage. Alternatively, it could be something totally new, representing new insights, new enlightenment. It could have a celebratory quality, undertaken nevertheless in a sincere awareness of the trials and tribulations encountered during the creative journey, and in their every-day lives. The creative Home Act marks the end of the creative journey--for now. Nevertheless, in its confident statement of a more emancipated belonging, the Home Act also signals a growth, a transcendance on the part of the student beyond some of

the hitherto unspoken oppressions of his/her lifeworld. Reflecting on the journey, teacher and student alike can see the world as a more joyful, expressive place, full of rich creative possibilities for the future.

A Journey reflected on

In describing such a scenario for an art of praxis, a biographical art enabling the student-stranger to speak his world more completely, I have tried to maintain the inclusiveness, the openness of possibility inherent in such an undertaking. It is of paramount importance that any teacher who undertakes such a creative journey be committed to the idea of an emancipated, biographical art-process. Such a voyage has to be undertaken in a spirit of openness, and humility. S/he must be constantly responsive to the student, changing the journey's "route" if necessary according to the needs of a situation. If the teacher's own artwork becomes an unobtrusive part of this process, all the better. It means that s/he is together with the students on the creative voyage--s/he isn't just paying lip-service. Commitment to "see it through" is essential, as such a process-ed, critical approach may encourage resistance, or even hostility on the part of various authorities.

Nevertheless, such creative initiatives can be full of rich possibilities. I believe that creative journeys like these can allow a student to speak his/her sense of unfolding, lived-ethnicity with greater confidence, and to a wider, more accepting audience. In sharing their ideas and feelings, their creative biographies, students have an opportunity to foster a greater feeling of shared community,

born of an appreciation of the many diverse voices which constitute the lifeworld of the classroom, and Canadian culture as a whole.

In this creative, created community exists a shared view of the world which counters the alienating tendencies of institutional education, and institutionalized thinking as a whole. With this perspective, students can believe, many for the first time, that in reflecting on their own life they can move beyond their own currently repressed existence toward a more enriched, creative future. As a voice of creative liberation, it joins other liberating voices in their alternative, polyphonic descriptions of possible worlds, vastly different from that envisioned by the powers-that-be.

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APPENDIX A

A letter I sent to my conversational partners.

My name is Cameron Graham, I am a graduate student involved in art education at the University of Alberta. I am interested in meeting and conversing with new Canadians who were active creatively in their country of origin, and are still involved in artwork here. As I am linguistically untrained, participants should preferably be able to communicate in English.

I am interested in learning of such peoples experiences and feelings, through conversations with them about themselves and their artwork. I believe that this research will help communicate more deeply and creatively what it means to be an immigrant in a strange country, and how it feels to be separated from ones native soil.

My research is being undertaken in the hope that it can help foster a greater understanding of the invaluable creative contribution that a multicultural perspective can provide in Canadian artistic and cultural education. I hope this brief explanation will clarify the intent of my proposed research.

My own biography had a significant part to play in the choice of my question, and I wished to express my commitment to both the spirit and the intent of its asking. Below is the biographical piece which I included in the letter to meet that end.

Voyage to a Question

Prior to living in Edmonton, I was employed as an art teacher in a high school in the northernmost corner of England. I taught sculpture, drawing and painting, enjoying this opportunity to explore many creative areas with my students. In addition, I was able to pursue my own artwork in my spare time. Creatively, I was pursuing a direction continued from early art school days.

I was indeed cozily embedded in a region with which I was familiar, in a convivial workplace where I felt secure, and amongst students and staff with whom I shared a similar world-view. My method of teaching, and its substance, was directly attributable to my own personal "tradition", in which their had been few breaks. My life in this community seemed to stretch before me along a well-trod, almost pre-ordained path. I and those around me shared common goals and assumptions about "how to live life".

This taken-for-grantedness was progressively undermined by my decision to leave Carlisle, and come to Edmonton. After much soul-searching, my decision to leave came about for a multitude of reasons. Perhaps the most significant was a growing sense of what could be described as social claustrophobia. I felt Canada offered me a wealth of opportunities which would remain unfulfilled if I were to remain in Britain and follow the path of least resistance. Edmonton promised a new direction in life, and a chance to succeed or fail.

My own belief in my mostly unquestioned life and career goals was brought into conscious examination, brought to the surface. My relationships with colleagues, friends and loved ones assumed a new tension. I swung between feeling like another "rat leaving the

sinking ship", and a betrayer of friends and family. People were sometimes encouraging sometimes vaguely resentful, when I voiced my intentions. At first I was mystified by this reaction, until I recalled my own response to friends of mine who voiced their intentions of coming to live in Canada. I had felt I recalled, threatened by their move. I had implicitly asked these questions of them, and myself: *What is wrong with our shared way of life that you should try another? What is wrong with us as people that you should wish to leave us?*

Their leaving created discomfort in those around them perhaps because it had forced us to a painful re-examination of our hitherto shared way of life, and ourselves as personalities. They had sensitized us to our individual sense of being in the world. An uncomfortable occurrence, which was soon forgotten after their departure in favour of more mundane preoccupations.

Having myself chosen to come to Canada I was again sensitized, but to a far greater extent this time. I was loosening my sense of cultural belonging in anticipation of finding new connections, in what for me truly was a New World. Inadvertently, I was creating that same tension in those close to me that my migrant friends had previously created. I was forcing them to unearth things about themselves which had previously been "out of sight and out of mind."

My leaving decision subjected me to the scrutiny of an inner-directed eye. This gaze was unfaltering as I crossed the Atlantic, and settled in Edmonton. Western Canada is predominantly English-speaking, and it is often swiftly assumed that an English-speaking migrant will have only a small sense of cultural dislocation. This is

not completely the case however. To draw a jocular analogy, it is rather like having had one drink too many at a party where you know nobody. Conversations with people become confusing and meaningless. Words don't carry quite the same meanings, and a slight sense of anxiety and disorientation hovers.

My sensitization grew as I encountered the problems of living in another country. Anxious to share in a sense of shared experience, I began to participate in the activities of the University of Alberta's "International Student's Organization", subsequently becoming its publicity organizer. I became strikingly aware of how small my own problems were in comparison to those people from non-English speaking countries. With often only a smattering of English, they had to try and make sense of a living and working environment where the most basic of their assumptions could be undermined, and consequently needed to be interpreted anew. One particular episode which brought this point home to me was when a group of international students in an orientation seminar, were told that in Canada it was considered socially taboo to sit down with strangers and chat amicably with them. The looks of surprise which greeted this statement of one of the social mores of the English-speaking world awakened me in a simple but powerful way, to the problems that the Stranger has adjusting to a new way of life.

Creatively, on coming to Canada, all was not as it had at first seemed. I slowly became aware of different hidden agendas which were at work. Conversations with new immigrants to Canada highlighted to what extent these "creative Strangers" felt they were functioning under a new aesthetic regime. They were experiencing a

cultural and creative fracturing as new pressures made their presence felt, and they responded to a new way of doing art.

For myself as a young art student, I had been encouraged to orient myself to the "avant garde" notion of the artist as an individual on the fringes of society. From there the reasoning went, I could call to consciousness that which most members of society kept hidden. My creative faculties would range more freely, freed from the taken for grantedness which limits creativity. Although this may be a suspect notion, a sensitizing did take place. The lifeworld took on a different hue. Like an immigrant (as I discovered later, on coming to Canada) I had cast myself in the role of Stranger. In such a role few things can be taken for granted or assumed. Much was brought to conscious consideration that would otherwise have remained hidden.

Drawing from my experience as a newcomer to Canada, I have come to feel that the creative migrant with his/her sense of isolation accentuated, can speak to us all with a voice born of a creative sensitivity of what it means to be a Stranger in Canada. They can speak through their art, and they can voice their experience in a unique synthesis of words and images. This I believe, can enrich understandings of what being a Stranger means in the cultural and creative arena, and how it has significance for us all in art and art education.

I also included a piece of writing which sought to describe, and develop a recurrent childhood image of mine. I felt it was an apt metaphor which would help express creatively and emotively some

notions of my research, and would enable a fuller shared understanding. This metaphor was "The Bridge".

The Bridge

The journey from one's mother country is more than a mere physical voyage, although that is itself no small undertaking. Your mind too must make a journey, as it adapts from what is comforting and familiar to what is unnerving, and alien. Nevertheless you adjust, and learning the bizarre ways of a new land, what was inexplicable becomes taken for granted.

Reflecting on what this experience meant to me, an image grew in my mind of *"The Bridge"*.

A Bridge spans a gap. It joins two separated bodies of land. Underneath are the swirling torrents. Before you set foot on the bridge, your feet press down into the soil of your motherland; you gaze across the chasm. That far-off place looks strange, alien. Tentatively at first, you set foot on the Bridge. It seems unthinkable that such an ethereal spiders-web can connect the bulk of two bodies of land, and bear your weight safely across to the other side. Nevertheless, you find yourself on it, neither in one land nor the other. You feel both apprehension and anticipation as you leave the old land and approach the new. Apprehension because the familiar lays behind you, and you approach the strange. Anticipation, because your uprooting has freed you from the bondings of your native soil, making you the solitary guardian of your own future. Stopping, you turn around. The motherland itself now looks far-off and unreal, untouchable. Striding forward again, the sights and

sounds of your new land beckon you, growing ever-closer and distinct.

APPENDIX B

Calendar of the conversations: April-July, 1987.

Evelyn. (At her Home).

1. April 14, (tape and notes).
2. May 5, (tape and notes).
3. May 25, (notes).
4. June 5, (tape and notes).

Mitsu. (At Grand Dene School, Edmonton).

1. May 6, (tape and notes).
2. May 7, (notes).
3. May 11, (tape and notes).

Sima. (In a Secondary Education committee room, Department of Secondary Education, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta).

May 14, (tape and notes).

June 9, (tape and notes).

July 7, (tape and notes).

On July 17, We met as a group to reflect upon our shared experience, -In room 333a., at the Department of Secondary Education, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta. (tape and notes).

APPENDIX C

Introductory Questions informing our first conversations.

Below are some questions which were also included in the letter to give focus to the first conversation. I hoped that they could help form the basis of reflections leading up to our opening talk.

What memories have you of your homeland?

What was life like in your homeland for you? What does it's culture mean for you?

How did your Art become important?

What was leaving like?

How did it feel getting accustomed to Canadian life? What was the settling-in process like?

What does your Art mean for you now?

How is your native culture still important, personally and creatively?

APPENDIX D

Excerpts from conversation transcripts

Excerpt from the second conversation with Sima:
Transcript from notes and tape.

ME=#. SIMA=@.

#You've had to leave two places so far. Your experience of leaving, how did it feel, that process?

@I was happy to leave, everything was planned beforehand. I was happy, I knew that I would come back from England after I finished the course. It was good in England because I was learning. When I finished, I realized I couldn't go back, the situation was bad, so I decided to come here.

#How did it feel realizing you couldn't go back to Iran?

@I didn't think I was going to stay here for long. I thought I would go back when things got better, now I see I cannot go back at all, there is nothing there.

#You've got lots of friends and family in Iran. You've had to adjust to the idea that you can't see them much. How have you got used to that idea?

@It's very hard, when you start isolating yourself from people, especially when the culture is so different. Friendship, expectations--gradually you isolate yourself because friends cannot meet your expectations. Friendships here are very defined. You do something for someone and you expect the same in return. It's not something you really care and really want to do for someone without any expectations. It's totally different from my background.

#So there's more definition here--isolating yourself. I noticed in myself, and talking with other people, a sense of isolation. Is it the whole creativity thing, or coming from another country, or what?

@I think its isolation cultural and social--both. You isolate yourself because you come from a different background, and socially, your education and your creativity is different. You can't meet with the societies expectations or standards of what they want. You lower your style, creativity, you become a different person, you make adjustments. That's not you, it's what you've created to make a living, to satisfy other people.

#Adjustments, isolation; do you always adjust to isolate yourself from people--a kind of protection?

@Sometimes for work, if you make your living by art, it's planned, it's protection. You want to make a living--so you have to.

#Before you left Iran for England, did you feel a kind of isolation, or that you were separating from something, as you decided to leave?

@Sometimes I did, because I wasn't doing what I wanted to. I wanted to get involved in art, that was the only part where I was very isolated. When I decided I had to go to take courses, that was good.

#Isolation in Iran, how did it feel?

@Just temporary isolation once in a while, which I could satisfy by painting, drawing, playing music. After, I felt good.

#So you satisfied this feeling?

@It wasn't a big feeling of isolation 'cause I was satisfied with my social life and my friends, everything, except that. . .

@So your art was answering something different? What did it mean then that it doesn't mean now?

@At that time, no force, obligation. If I got "that feeling", which was temporary, I did some painting. Then it would go, and I wasn't scared of losing something. Workwise or social-life, the first thing you want to do is make a living. You can wash cars--you're finished. All the work and study over the years is wasted.

#Scared of loosing what you've got; in a personal, creative sense, what does this being scared of loosing something mean? You've come a long way, what does loosing something mean to you as a creative person?

@If I'm not creating I'm like a vegetable. My brain, my body, works like a robot if I can't use it properly. Sometimes I feel like a vegetable when I can't be creative, can't be what I want.

#In Iran, doing your work answered something, and your creative work answers something here. Do you "feel it" more greatly in Canada, or is it a different kind of need?

@It's totally different because the feeling I had in Iran, I didn't feel threatened by any outside forces, but here I can't because I can only be creative when I'm going to have a show.

#It's like a material prompting? When I felt creativity at home, it was when pressure had built up. When I felt joyful, or depressed. Does it mean something different here?

@Something that you said--that you have to get that feeling to be creative. When I'm having a show, sometimes I feel forced, not in the right mood to be creative, but because I want a show I have to force myself. In Iran that wasn't why. If I couldn't finish a painting or satisfy myself, I didn't expect myself to satisfy myself. I didn't expect to sell those works, it was something totally personal.

#There wasn't the same pressure of expectation of others. Does the idea of feeling strange, being a stranger, fit in here?

@You feel strange in the environment. The kinds of feedback you get are different. They make you feel strange. The type of photographing I do, people don't appreciate it a lot.

Excerpt from the third conversation with Mitsu.
Transcript from notes and tape.

@ME. #MITSU.

@We talked before about the feeling of being refreshed, a new start. The idea of language being a problem which allowed you to get into art more. Being restrained in one way enabling you to do something somewhere else.

#Certain concepts cannot be described by words. English was my second language. I came to see words could not describe it all. Now English is my main tongue. In your mother tongue much is taken-for-granted, you never express the meaning of an idea, what you mean by a word. When you go to a foreign land, a foreign culture you learn it, but you also learn about your own culture, finding your own. In order to identify the color black, you need white, in order to realize the light, you should have shadow. It's an analogy for when you face another culture. Haiku, when it's translated, there's

inevitable distortions; "old stuff in new clothes". Things you encounter as an immigrant, there's layers and layers of incidence.

@ As a youngster in Japan, you had a sense of separateness. Has it stayed with you?

#Inside? Yes, I left at the age of thirty two, so my personality was formed. I read a book about Lafcadio Hearn, he was English but well known in Japan. He was born of an English father and a Greek mother who spoke no English. He was taken by parents back to England. Then his mother died, and he was brought up by his grandmother as a "gentleman". He didn't get on well with other kids, his face was darker. He was caught in cultural turmoil. He grew up and went to Greece where he studied some kind of anthropology, but he was poor. One hundred years. ago, Japan started "modernization"--westernization. Many English teachers were hired. He went and taught at the Imperial University, but he was unhappy. He went to western Japan and married a local girl. He started writing English novels, translated into Japanese. They became classics. He became Japanese, name of Koizumi Yakomo. Nearly all Japanese know his stories. Hearn reflects cultural divergence, twists.

@Instead of things being separate, everything passes through everything else?

#Conflict of culture, interference. Classical musicians often come from where different cultures contact. It's like the ocean, where

currents meet. The richest place where you can fish. Here is a place where things meet.

@In history, these places change. Flows and mixes--does it complement your idea of the world?

#Yes, this intentionally and unintentionally comes to surface in my painting.
Now I'm putting my thoughts down in writing. It helps you to get further more, it gives you a fresh hold, gives you a chance to get more depth in your understanding.

@It helps me because it gives my thoughts an anchor, a focus. It gives me a place to speak from. If I don't have that it escapes.

#That's it--a key. I'm trying to focus in on key ideas. For me the idea of feeling a little isolated from culture is slightly different from. . .as a human being, you learn to cope with surroundings, and call it experience. Experience is important to keep "grey" an activity effectively. When you encounter something different you may "break down", so through experience we learn how to cope, so it becomes an everyday object, so we don't need to use our brain. We cope in a reactionary way. Artists can function in different way. Performing artists display emotions each time they play in front of an audience. I can understand why they're exhausted. Visual artists have to respond to their environment in a fresh manner each time. If not, they become a lousy artist--finished, end of the line. We have

to refresh our memories, each time we see the environment. We have to respond, as if you see things the first time. It's draining. My family live their life, I'm "there", so there's conflicts. We share the same shelter.

@When I do artwork, I'm obsessive and sensitive, because I have to be sensitive.

#Yes, you use all senses possible. It's draining emotionally, difficult to find a balance, especially as I work in an instinctive, intuitive way. I don't do any preparatory work. What I have is a vague "feeding" atmosphere. I start work. I find a clue, as if it's a stain on the wall and somehow it started it's own formation. So I try to capture and nourish the images, which start their own life, and I become a kind of medium, a hand.

@This "naturalness", does that come from your beliefs?

#Yes it comes from a deep inner self, from my upbringing, Japanese culture, a feeling of Japaneseness, the things I have seen or been. Not all those things are Japanese. Classical music, architecture, painting--all these things are inside of me. Sometimes it causes conflict, imbalance, sometimes similarities, like modern architecture.

@Is that describing your sense of where you are now? A feed of many diverse influences?

#If I were in Japan now, I would still have felt trapped, in an isolated island, where most ideas come from across the sea. It's very difficult for an individual to be entirely free in such a homogeneous society. Although you feel different you can't escape feeling a kind of homogeneity. Quite a few people feel the same conflict. If I stay in Japan I feel trapped. I'm not asked to express these kind of feelings. Coming to Canada, it's not "old Europe", it's not "great America", it's a kind of vacuum-land, its not Japan.

@Here I'm allowed to be myself because I'm not told to be anything.

#In Japan you cannot escape the feeling you're doing something different, it becomes all pretentious and intentional. Here you don't need to fear, you're just doing what you feel, and it's accepted.

@Here do you feel as if you've brought Japan inside you, and it stops you doing things?

#I was in Japan thirty two years. It installed a gyroscope which keeps running, it's still here. Sometimes I wonder if it matters. What I am today is quite different from what I was yesterday--or will be tomorrow.

@The reason people appreciate your paintings is not because they do the same paintings or have the same background, or they're Japanese, it's because they share enough things so they get what they want out of it. Being "stuck", was that a factor for you?

#Yes. When I left, there was pollution hysteria. Daily food quotas in the newspapers. That's the trouble with living in a homogeneous society, there's no insulation between. Information goes through like--that! I can't stand that about a homogeneous society. I didn't want to get stuck, I needed some air to breath. In Canada there's plenty of "air" I needed isolation, air to breathe.

Excerpt from the second conversation with Evelyn.
Transcript from notes and tape.

@=ME. #=EVELYN.

@Resolving two lifeworlds, coming from one place to another. A life-change. What does it mean?

#Filipinos here tend to forget, ignore the world they left behind. They acquire habits and patterning of people here, and just cope. I tried to carry all my "baggage" here from the Philippines, to remind myself where I'm from, and why am I here. Most people come for economic reasons, or to be reunited with their family. Artists go to different countries for the "search". Culture, history, color of landscape- going very specifically for something. They're not "leaving" because they're going back. But me, I remind other Filipinos of what exists in the Philippines. That's what's difficult, what I mean about resolving two worlds. A constant going back and forth.

@There's a physical and mental going back and forth?

#A constant shift. Social structures, lifestyles, the economic situation are very different.

@For you, is there a constant shifting back and forth--a shifting of gears?

#Yes I use the gear shift in metaphor a lot. The problem with the gear is that you can shift up or down , and I find that I shift down when I go to the Philippines!

@This problem of a switch. Do you find you're constantly switching between two worlds every minute of the day or does it only happen from time to time?

#No. I live my life like a regular Canadian would. Looking for a visual vocabulary for my work. Talking to Filipinos or talking about the Philippines, that's when the whole awareness of identity is brought to the fore. In a day to day basis it doesn't come across as much.

@ What do you mean by "bringing to the fore"?

When I'm asked about the Philippines I can get very emotional. That's where the disturbance the anger, sometimes frustration, is. I

sense a personal benefit by being here. A sense of political freedom and social equality.

@ It's not exactly nostalgia. It's almost as if you carry round certain images which gain more focus when you move away. It's almost as if going further away. . .

#. . . it becomes more real. Well that's what was happening for the longest time. That's why I went back to the Philippines, it's to reinforce and verify that feeling. To find out that it's not all fantasy, as opposed to what actually does exist now. The country could develop, change. You could sit there longing for something that doesn't exist. That was my need, to go back to see that there is hope in the country.

@ Having this view from a distance. Being removed enough to be truly involved with the act of creating, is it a paradox, a clash or a Yin and Yang thing--how does it form for you?

I had a drawing instructor who always insisted: " Don't start drawing when you look at the object. Stare and stare, study it, and then start working." You have to know the subject, and know it well enough. To do that you have to be detached from it. That's a contradiction, to create you have to remove yourself from the actual-

@ Yes, do you create it from out of you or out of it?

#Oh yes, is it Kline that paints his body on the canvas? It has something immediate about that. I don't tend to work that way. Being a Stranger I'm very cautious as to how I will be accepted and understood. Sometimes, I feel very comfortable, so much so that I sometimes feel removed from others like me. They were like foreigners to me.

You said comfortable, it's like being at home. Do you sometimes feel alienated when you visit home?

@ Yes, comfortable as in familiarity. It's difficult to find words for it. Even though I feel like a foreigner sometimes, I really know that I'm not, I tend to gravitate towards others that are like me in mind and energy. I do gain a certain type of belonging. Comfortable is being able to work. Like this certain artist who had a nervous breakdown, he was able to work as he learned to accept himself and then be able to objectify his feelings. It gives relief. A good piece of work has the mind, the passion and the skill.

Form and Content?

@ Subjected to the educational system here I do feel that there is a certain technically guided form, especially when I was encouraged to use larger paper and larger tools to create. I work in a modest way, a smaller and more personal scale. Somehow being Filipino does not express itself in scale or technique but in content. It is disturbing to have to rediscover a form that will convey my content.

During my visit home, I found it disturbing that my fellow Filipinos were restricting themselves to certain paper and size of paper to create without realizing it. But when I encounter a new, different media, I find it very difficult to adjust to. I did not know what to do with it.

You find technical freedom here and technical restrictions back home?

@ Yes, but back home with our technical restrictions we are also capable of expressing ourselves.

This technical freedom-- does it help reveal new conciousness?

@ I do not mean to put down techniques, but I believe that you could create out of the minimum and restrictions, but you cannot necessarily create by being a technician. It's like the super-realists who create super real images. Technique over-rules the subject. The object becomes meaningless.

Do you think there are individuals that are totally removed from being touched by other culture? Is their anyone around who is exclusively of one society, or are we a "jigsaw" of different influences? How many untouched individuals and societies are there--can you be totally autonomous?

@ If you're powered, with a sense of confidence, you don't have to take in influences. The power of media with Ethiopia--"Band-aid", the media with the help of art--music. An awareness was brought about which awakened people. But the phenomena had been around for many years before that. My work can stay in the gallery. But unless anyone wants to "take it in" and try to absorb it. . . The immigrant artist can continue to show freedom. The viewer may decide to take in more than just what's happening on the wall. To start thinking, to get a rapport between the viewer and the work itself. Our society brings the global context closer to home, but if you look at people's life patterns, Edmontonians with heritage days, they don't even touch the surface of understanding adjustment problems.

#I'm trying to get closer to the feel of coming from somewhere, and communicating the emotional impact, the local's "privileged state". Canadians, does their privileged state allow them to understand people coming to Canada who don't really understand what the situation is?

@People who've never really been without, to understand what it is to come from a place--does it take a Stranger to expose the obvious? Yes. If you come from a place without, if you've never had, it doesn't mean you don't know how it feels to have. So you accumulate just for the sense of having, because you were so deprived. So if as an artist you haven't had the opportunity to express yourself, to have a big piece of paper, or to try photography, you will tend to want to indulge. A Stranger can show people here. It's like my shopping

carts. I started photographing them, and people realized the context, understood what it reflected. They're a symbol of the society. It disturbed me, I wasn't familiar to it it, because it doesn't exist in other part[s]. . .

#It does reflect a certain ethos--"things come cheap". Was your avenue of discovery a search?

@My sense of art is self expression. An object or situation operates on my sensitivity. Then the process of thinking and visualizing to turn it into a product. As a newcomer, and me being what I am, I questioned the images and I questioned it's use and I questioned its relationship with the environment or with people. Any Stranger who came in would do the same thing initially. Either do it the same way as the locals do it or in a way that would be disturbing because they're not used to it. Because it's new I think that you would react to it. Not the way the locals would have it. Taken-for-granted you can walk past it every day. I'm not saying the locals don't have sensitivity, they're looking a different way. Your perceptions are quite different.

#You're operating in a different way?

@Yes. I'm not qualifying the work. I'm not saying the locals don't do good art. Art is self, human, expression.

#Its a response to your kind of needs. The trade-offs?. . .

@It's unresolved. Do I loose a bit of being Filipino here, and a bit of being Canadian there? Do I loose a bit as I'm doing my work and does it gain some more strands?

#Are any of us exclusively of a culture? Before I came here, was I a little bit North American? The modern mass culture?

@You have that optimum choice if you expose yourself to that diversity of culture. The terms of bigots will block out diversity and change.

APPENDIX E

A Lima, Ohio, Demonstration.

In 1985 the Lima Art Association sponsored a sculpture competition for the town square. A committee of leading Lima citizens and Art Association bureaucrats awarded twenty-five thousand dollars to Cincinnati, Ohio, sculptor Stuart Fink for the design and installation of a twelve foot high, fluted-columned, double-arched, cast concrete fantasy mounted on a two-tiered base. Fink calls this work "Trinity" and describes it as a representation of the Lima community (M. Huffman, personal communication, September 21st. 1986).

On May 31st 1985, at mid-day, students enrolled in Mike Huffman's Art II class at Lima senior High School walked a seven foot papier-mache milkshake, a three foot hamburger, and several six foot french fries through the streets of mid-city Lima to the town square where "Trinity" will be installed. The monumental fast food that they carried was marked with the logo of the Kewpee Restaurant chain. The students and their teacher stayed several hours in the town square. During this time they discussed with interested passers-by the Lima Art Association Sculpture Competition, "Trinity", and the students' alternative to the choice funded by the Association. These discussions were video taped for later reference. A local art critic covered the event for the city's newspaper, and a subsequent article was published.

This public demonstration by Mike Huffman and his students was motivated by their dissatisfaction with the process and results of the sculpture competition. According to Huffman (personal communication January 2nd 1986), he and his students felt it was ludicrous for the sculpture competition committee to commission a public sculpture, purportedly reflective of the Lima community, from an artist who would visit the city on only one or two occasions . . . Huffman states, "Our 'Kewpee Piece' was a direct image from the community. Unlike the artist in question, we had a long standing relationship with Lima. That relationship allowed us to focus on a single aspect common to almost everyone at every social and economic level in the community. We merely repeated expressively a beloved image as subject and theme for our public sculpture.

Quoted from:

Blandy, D. Part two. Public dialogue on art. 4: Art, social action, and the preparation of democratic citizens. Blandy and Congdon Editors. Art in a Democracy. Teachers college press. Columbia University. New York and London,1987. p.49.

APPENDIX F

Release Letter

Letter of permission to reproduce participant's artwork for use in the text of the Thesis.

April 5th., 1988.

re: Use of Artwork reproductions in Mr. C.J. Graham's Master of Education Thesis.

I agree to allow Cameron Graham, a graduate student in Secondary Education at the University of Alberta, to use photographed or printed copies of my artwork in his M.Ed. Thesis, "The creative Stranger's journey: Towards a liberating pedagogy in art education."

I am permitting the reproduction of my artwork on the understanding that these copies will be used in his Thesis only, and will not be used in any other publications without my express permission. I grant permission with the expectation that due acknowledgement will be given of my work within the text of the said Thesis.

Yours,

APPENDIX G

"Reflective letters"

Reflections sent to Evelyn after the second Conversation.

Dear Evelyn,

One of the things which I feel "muddied the waters" of our last conversation was that we seemed to be trying to juggle so many concepts all at the same time. . .and confusion was the result! Here, I'll try and provide my understandings of our conversation, in order that together we may arrive at an idea of the major ideas forming themselves in our talk.

You mentioned the "Ying and Yang" a couple of times--the idea of mutually opposed forces in a dynamic balance, as part of an integrated whole. Is that what strangeness--membership, isolation--togetherness means for us? There seems to be so many seemingly antipathetic forces emerging in our dialogue:

Stranger--Member

Ying--Yang

Distant--Close

Separated--Joined

Witholding--Sharing

Callousness--Sensitivity

Isolated--Belonging

Freedom--Bondage

Opening--Closing

Unsafe--Safe

Moving--Static

--ET CETERA!

Looking at the above list, initially it seems as if most of the positive virtues are stacked on the right, but on closer inspection, what emerged for me was the extent to which many of these polarized opposites actually functioned together in a kind of dynamic relationship. As Mitsu said, "How can you truly know what white really is until you've seen black?" I wonder what this can tell us about the life-experience of the creative Stranger?

What I'm getting at, I suppose, is the notion of strange as it exists in western, and other cultures--its meaning often has a pejorative value, I suspect. Nevertheless, the notion of the stranger, strangeness, the strange--is a recurrent theme in all branches of creativity. There seems to be a need to come to terms with the strangeness in all of our lives. Every day, we encounter the strange and the familiar. Some reject, and hide away from what is alien to them--others welcome it.

We are both endeavouring to understand what feeling strange means for us, so in a sense we are sensitizing, opening ourselves up to that which is unfamiliar in our conversations, reflections, and beyond. Our "feeling strange", what use is it to us--or is it just an undesireable, "rogue" emotion?

We all feel the need to "be at Home" in comfort, safety, and membership, so:

Why must we escape belonging, what does strangeness give us that membership can't?

What can this uncomfortable feeling teach us--and how can we enable others to learn? Why do these "others" need to learn?

Perhaps alluding to these questions--I wonder if the experience of strangeness changes our consciousness of self, and self-in-world? Does it perhaps even provide the opportunity to transcend something?

I think I've said enough now! I hope you find these thoughts of mine interesting;

From Evelyn: May 28, 1987: Follow-up of my last [the third] conversation with Cam Graham.

Cam, I re-read your "Bridge" metaphor. It works. The bridge as physical structure is "de facto" undisputed. The Stranger that crosses from one side to the other accepts the physical transfer from one familiar site to a strange new land. Who or what becomes strange? The artist that has left, or the land that remains to be explored? These paradoxes should operate as constants, so that mind, eyes and heart will continue to move in and out of reality and illusion. That intangible state of making opposites the same, be they Yin-Yang?

The bridge transports. The possibilities of what a bridge can carry across then becomes endless: Things, ideas, politics, art--all through the human persona. The artist as Stranger that crosses the

bridge brings with him or her an even more unique "gift". He or she brings stories, thoughts and feelings all packaged in his or her work which we call--art. They are tales which should touch that core universality if it is masterfully crafted with imagination, truth, and beauty. However, this dillemma, the hidden unknown can remain buried in the depths of that Stranger-artist if he or she feels unwelcomed, intimidated, and insignificant. That Stranger can also cross over, arrogant and sure that that the tale he or she has to tell is the definitive statement of the human condition. In either circumstances, true communication and sharing is obstructed.

A recurring image that has resulted from our conversations is that of a stranger that has come into a gathered crowd. S/he has a story to tell and would like to be heard--as with Ulysses recounting his tale to the receptive Phaecians. An undeniable aspect of the Stranger-artist is that s/he has made a journey. However long or adventurous that journey may have been is now a part of the Stranger-artist's existance. As we talk of separation and distancing as a choice the Stranger-artist makes, s/he is like any other. They too have a need to belong and to be accepted. To be appreciated is to transcend that common level of exchange. In many ways I know that seeing myself as this Stranger-artist, I would like to be accepted on my own terms--that my personal history, foreign vocabulary, and novel ways be acknowleged as part of my identity even though my years in Canada have somehow transformed me into an oddity: That of a Canadian-Filipina.

On a more specific line of thought I have come to realise that all these years I have kept a rather enclosed and autistic perception

of myself despite my exposure to a country that thrives on "freedom of expression". My art can get carried away with emotional content so I tended to censor myself to protect the innocent viewer. I am constantly trying to work out a viable balance--mind and soul. It has been a shocking self-discovery from these sessions that yes, I was seduced by the Canadian governmental system and societal structure, but that I myself have not thought it is mine enough to be relaxed about the things I have to say in my work. Conceptual art impressed me in that it dealt with a limitless appreciation of human thought. Yet I find the average Canadians acceptance of art is too intellectualized and their tolerance toward emotional self-expression is limited to their own understanding and experience. I would like to penetrate that barrier and make my story as important as their story. The stranger-artist has the power to disturb that "shared" world view. The stranger-artist's journey or change brings to the surface many questions, fears and prospects for him/herself and therefore the potential is there for him or her to bring to the surface "disturbances" that reflect societies norm of perception.

Are we as humans more receptive to fictionalized aliens? Do we not readily accept their foreignness in more physical terms? As human beings there are too many external similarities that delude us into thinking we are equal or that we are the same. Is ET not easier to accept than Cam Graham? I wonder. . . it frustrates me to know that despite our technological advancements in communication we have not as a people started to edge towards total equality and freedom. South Africa's Apartheid attests to that. International response to this social injustice reflects the polarized view we have

of human beings. To many, there are grades of humans. Those in control believe in a classification "grade A" human.

The artist transcends these levels through work that communicates life. It is the artist who often defines the spieces homo-sapiens; by giving it the attributes of "being human". The Stranger artist gives humanness an added dimension--that of dissimilarity. We are all the same yet different. The thrill and fear of encountering a "Stranger" is to discover that intriguing dimension of strangeness which we all have the capacity to comprehend.

Have I rambled on? I am beginning to feel I am onto some dogmatic platitude--Stop. What I wholeheartedly want to say is--the Stranger has crossed over, he or she has taken some risks, nonetheless, his or her presence is now to be contended with by the gathered crowd.

Cam, I cannot see these sessions going on much further. I am excited by all the jargon and visual prospects of our efforts. Now I would like to return to just working . . .